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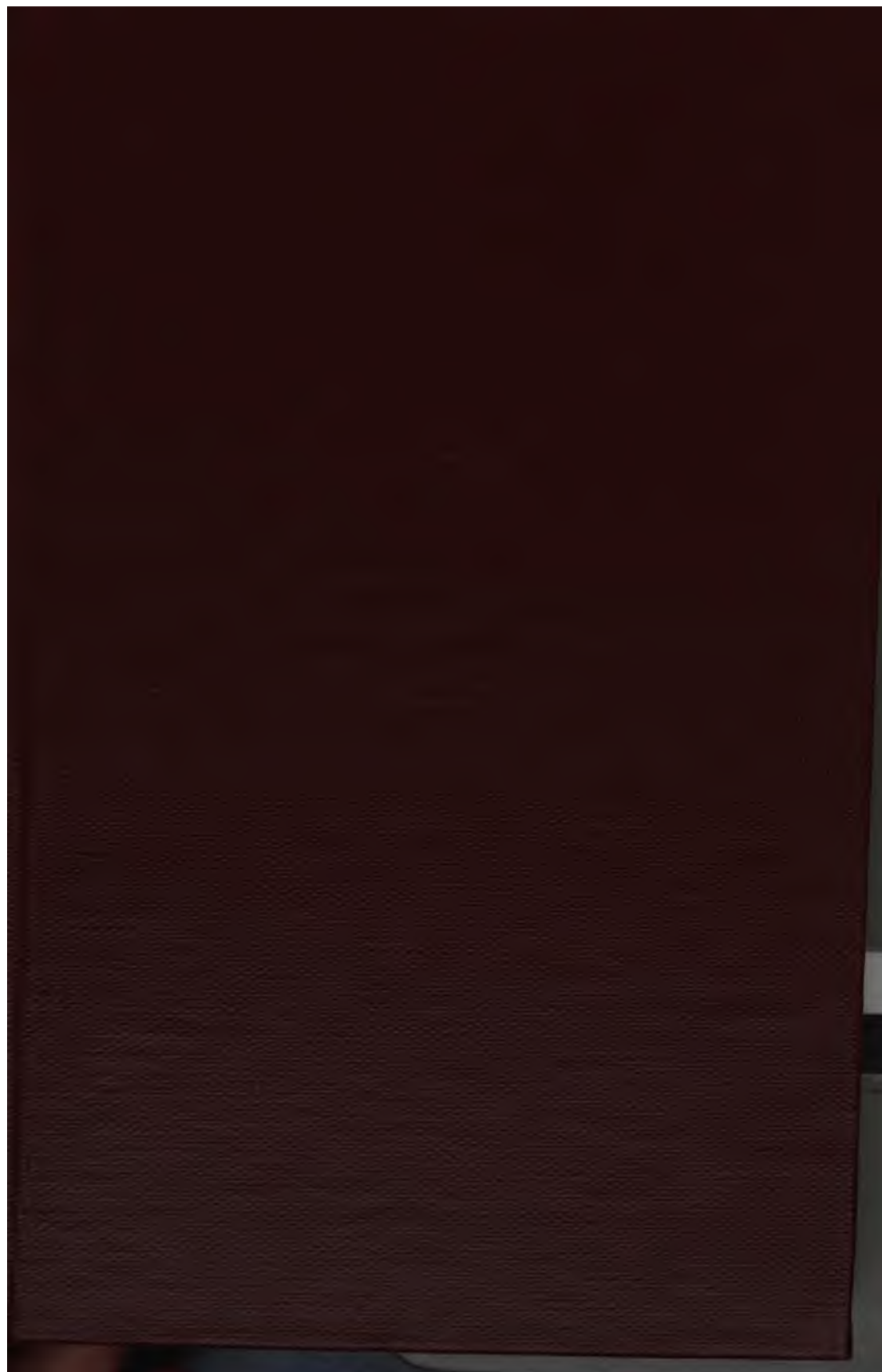
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LETTERS

ON

UNITARIANISM;

ADDRESSED TO THE MEMBERS

OF THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

IN THE

CITY OF BALTIMORE.

BY SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

**PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY AND CHURCH GOVERN-
MENT, IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED
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“Letters on Unitarianism; addressed to the members of the First Presbyterian Church in the City of Baltimore. By SAMUEL MILLER, D. D. Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government, in the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, at Princeton.”

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Clerk of the District of New-Jersey.

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LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

Introductory Remarks—Design of these Letters—Unitarian Creed—Importance of the subject.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

A TRAIN of events, as unexpected as unsought by me, has led to the present publication. When, in the course of the last year, my ardent desire to promote your welfare, and my affectionate respect for your young Pastor, prompted me to consent, on the day of his Ordination, to address you from the pulpit, I little thought that obloquy and controversy were to result from the service of that day. But so it has happened. Some of your Unitarian neighbours have deemed it proper to make me an object of repeated attack, and my sermon on that occasion a subject of protracted and tedious discussion. I have seldom been more surprised than to find, that a few plain sentences, which were delivered

under the impression that they contained nothing more than what was universally understood to be the sentiments of the Orthodox, should give such deep offence, and lead to so much waste of ink and paper. Nor can I yet account for the fact, but by supposing that the Unitarians in the *United States* are determined to make the experiment whether they can write themselves into notice and importance, and in prosecuting this experiment, resolve to let nothing, however trivial, escape their animadversion. If this be their plan, I make no complaint of its operation on me. I am not certain that any thing which has occurred, is to be, for a moment, regretted. On the contrary, a consciousness of having done my duty, has cheered me under the past; and if the following pages should prove in any degree useful to You or your Children, I shall have reason unfeignedly to rejoice in what was, in itself, by no means desirable to a lover of peace.

But, although the circumstances alluded to, have certainly given occasion to the present address, and have served to create, at once, an interest in your prosperity, and a freedom in ap-

proaching you, which I might not otherwise have felt in the same degree ; yet I hope you will not consider these Letters as intended to answer any thing which has been recently published against me or my Sermon, by the "Unitarian of *Baltimore*." My account with that writer has been, long since, on my part, finally closed ; and it is by no means my purpose to open or review it. Whatever may be the case hereafter, my resolution, as yet, remains unshaken, not to take the least notice of any thing from that quarter. And to this resolution I adhere, not merely because it has been once formed and announced ; but also because the writer who has honoured me with so much hostile notice, has, happily, conducted his attacks in such a manner as to render defence altogether unnecessary.

My object in writing at present is your benefit. It is to put you on your guard against a system of error, which I have no hesitation in considering as the most delusive and dangerous of all that have ever assumed the Christian name. This system its advocates in your neighbourhood, are endeavouring to recommend and establish with a zeal worthy of a better cause.

From the pulpit and the press, by the formal volume, the humble pamphlet, and every variety of exhibition that ingenuity can devise, they are endeavouring to make an impression on the publick mind. In every direction, and with a profusion of the most lavish kind, they are daily scattering abroad their instruments of seduction. Probably in no part of our country out of *Massachusetts*, do these poisoned agents so completely fill the air, or, like one of the plagues of *Egypt*, so noisomely "come up into your houses, your chambers, and your kneading troughs," as in *Baltimore*. In fact, the Unitarians in that neighbourhood seem to be emulating the zeal of some of their brethren in *England*; who have been known to go into an Orthodox church; to withdraw during the prayer, that they might not join in "idolatrous devotions;" and on their return, to strew on a *Communion table*, which happened to be spread on that day, a parcel of Socinian tracts, and pamphlets.* I have heard of nothing quite equal to this in the *United States*; but, from present appearances, am by no means confident that something of the same

* RYLAND'S *Partiality and Unscriptural Direction of Socinian Zeal*, p. 39.

kind will not soon be exhibited. Now, though I have no fear of the influence of all this on the minds of those who read, and think, and inquire and pray; yet there may be others to whom an antidote is not wholly unnecessary. The sagacious and eloquent Mr. *Burke* has somewhere said, "Let us only suffer *any* person, however manifestly he may be in the wrong, to tell us his story, morning and evening, but for one twelve-month, and he will be our master." In almost every congregation there is a considerable number to whom this maxim applies with peculiar force. The young and inexperienced, who are not aware of the insidious arts of error; the busy, who have but little taste for reading; and little time or disposition for profound reflection; the amiable, who are ready to look with a partial eye on every serious and plausible claim; and the gay and worldly, who are predisposed in favour of an indulgent system;—all these, when frequently assailed by the zealous, the confident, and the talkative patrons of heresy, will be peculiarly liable to be unduly impressed in their favour. When they every day hear individuals, and every day meet with pamphlets, which, on the one hand, in the

most triumphant tone, praise the Unitarian system, as the only enlightened, liberal, benevolent and *rational* system, and its adherents as decisively the most learned, amiable, and pious friends of truth, and candid inquiry; and, on the other hand, stigmatize its opponents, as narrow-minded, prejudiced, austere, righteous overmuch, and enemies of liberal thinking;—when they find these representations made every day, and repeated without contradiction, they will be apt at length to believe them. When they find so many confident assertions, so many plausible professions, and so many high authorities, vaunted on one side, and little or nothing of a counter kind produced on the other; they may begin to think that there is really more to be said in favour of what they hear called heresy, and less in support of what they have been accustomed to think truth, than they once imagined.

It is for such persons, more especially, that I write. Though neither their occupations or habits will allow the greater part of them to read a large work, they may be willing to spare an hour or two, occasionally, to go through a small manual. And though they would not, perhaps,

feel much interest in the best written treatise, by a distant stranger, who had no particular reference to themselves ; yet they may be disposed to listen, for a short time, to one who gives some evidence that he ardently desires the prosperity of them and their Pastor, and who has written with a special view to their benefit.

I would then, my Christian Friends, most respectfully and earnestly entreat your serious attention to this subject. Pass it not by as an unimportant speculation. Give at least a transient hearing to one who has something to say to you, which he considers as deeply momentous, and who is conscious of no aim but that of doing you good. Recollect that the cause of truth has more to fear from the indolence and indifference of those who profess to be her friends, than from the activity or the arguments of her enemies. Recollect, too, that the native tendency of the human heart is to embrace some such corrupt and delusive system as that which calls itself Unitarianism. Many who respect Religion in general, and who would abhor the thought of throwing off all regard to it ; yet desire to have it so modified, as to give them as little trouble,

and subject them to as little restraint, as possible. Many others are in reality infidels; but are unwilling to avow it, on account of the pain which such an avowal would inflict upon their friends, and the disgrace which it might draw upon themselves; and, therefore, are disposed to resort to something which bears the name of Christianity, while it makes few demands, either on their faith or practice, essentially different from their infidel creed. And there are not a few who have had a pious education, and whose consciences will not suffer them to rest without some *form of godliness*, while, at the same time, they supremely *love the world, and the things of the world*.—All these will be naturally apt to take refuge in Unitarianism; especially if it be recommended by a plausible and confident advocate, or have obtained currency to any considerable extent among the splendid and fashionable around them. SOMETHING such persons MUST have, to save appearances, or to satisfy conscience; and Unitarianism will give less pain to natural feeling; will call for less self-denial; and will more readily accommodate itself to every sort of pursuit and habit, except that which is right, than any other scheme which calls itself by the name

of Christianity. These considerations, my Friends, ought very solemnly to impress your minds. If such be the natural tendency of the human heart, who can say that he has no interest in the subject? Even supposing that you are in no danger yourselves from these temptations—a supposition which no professor of religion who feels as he ought the deceitfulness of his own heart, will be ready to admit;—still your children, and other relatives, may be seriously exposed to danger. It behoves you, then, to exercise the most constant and anxious care, that they be properly armed against the enemy; that they do not fall a prey to his seductions, from want of fidelity on the part of those whom God has constituted the guardians, no less of their spiritual, than of their temporal welfare.

You will not expect me, in these Letters, to enter at large into the controversy between the Orthodox and the Unitarians. A number of distinguished Individuals, both in our own country and in *Europe*, within a few years past, as well as in former times, have written so largely and so well, on this branch of polemick theology, that I forbear to undertake the dis-

cussion of the general subject. The limits to which I confine myself, do not admit of this. Nor is it necessary. My purpose is, to treat, in a very cursory manner, a few points in the controversy, chiefly practical, which, though not wholly neglected by other writers, have not been so frequently or fully exhibited as I could have wished to see them. Those who have an opportunity and a taste for more extensive and critical reading on the subject, will, of course, seek for other and larger works. In the mean time, if, by taking a view of the subject more adapted to those who have little leisure, and no convenient access to the volumes of the learned, I shall be the means of satisfying a single doubting inquirer, or of putting on his guard one whose foot was about to slide, I shall consider myself as most richly rewarded.

I hope, my Christian Friends, it is unnecessary for me to assure you, that in offering to your consideration the following remarks, I have not an unfriendly feeling towards any individuals on earth who bear the Unitarian name. On the contrary, unless I am deceived, the most hearty good will, and the most unfeigned desire to pro-

mote their welfare, have actuated me in this undertaking, and in all that I have written. No attack on private character is intended. If I know myself, I abhor every weapon of this kind. It is not with the *persons* of Unitarians that I have to do ; but with their acknowledged *principles*. These, I am persuaded, are not only erroneous, but awfully and destructively so. No man who allows himself to reflect, can be neuter or indifferent in this warfare. It is a warfare waged for all that is glorious in the Gospel, and for all that is precious in the hopes of man. Deliberately believing as I do, that the system of the Unitarians is nothing less than a total denial and subversion of the Christian religion ; and that, so far as they gain an influence, it is, like that of the fabled Syrens of old, to allure but to destroy ; it is impossible for me to think of making terms with such a system. Having professed to devote myself unreservedly and forever to the glory of the ever blessed Redeemer, “wo “is me” if I consent, for a moment, to parley with those who blaspheme his name, or would degrade his religion ! Whatever may be the sacrifice, even if it be that of life itself, this must be forborne and abhorred. While, therefore, I

respect the persons, and desire to promote the happiness, of those who embrace the heresy in question, I am bound, as a conscientious man, to do all in my power to expose the sin and danger of the heresy itself, and to warn my fellow men against its fatal allurements. And this, by the grace of God, I am resolved to do, as long as the convictions are such as have long impressed, and do now, with growing strength, impress my mind.

But before we proceed further, it may not be improper to pause a moment and inquire, what is meant by *Unitarianism*? What system of faith does this title designate? It is a specious title. It purports, at first view, and is, perhaps, really intended to convey an impression to the popular mind, that those who bear it, are the only believers in *one God*, while all others believe in *a plurality of Gods*. Be on your guard, I pray you, against this illusion; for, whether intended or not, it deserves no other name. The Orthodox, it is well known, contend for the Unity of God as steadfastly and zealously as Unitarians, or any other denomination, have ever done. But when we speak of Unitarians, we mean to point

out those who reject the Bible doctrine of the TRINITY IN UNITY; who contend that there is in Jehovah but ONE PERSON, as well as ONE ESSENCE; and who, with the doctrine of the Trinity, reject all the other PECULIAR and FUNDAMENTAL doctrines of the Gospel. Those who bear this name, are, indeed, by no means agreed among themselves. Some entertain a higher opinion of the Redeemer's character than others, as well as different sentiments on some other fundamental doctrines of Christianity. It is obviously impossible therefore, in any one statement, to exhibit the opinions of *all* who profess to belong to this general denomination. But the great body of those who call themselves Unitarians in *Great Britain* and the *United States*, substantially agree, it is believed, in the following opinions.

They believe that the doctrine of the TRINITY is not found in Scripture; that it is one of the corruptions of Christianity, and among the earliest and most mischievous of those corruptions. This is so well known, that no proof or illustration of it is required.

They believe that *Christ was a MERE MAN*; that he was the Son of *Joseph* and *Mary*, born in the ordinary way; that he had no existence previously to his birth and appearance in *Judea*; that he was not only FALLIBLE, but LIABLE TO SIN, like other men; and that, of course, he ought by no means to be worshipped. Dr. *Priestley* expressly says, that the apostles had no other ideas of Christ than "that he was "A MAN LIKE THEMSELVES."* Again; he says, "It is the clear doctrine of scripture that "Christ was simply a man."† Mr. *Belsham* goes further, and suffers himself to speak in the following shocking terms: "The Unitarian doctrine is that *Jesus of Nazareth* was a man "constituted in all respects like other men, subject to the same infirmities, the same IGNORANCE, PREJUDICES, AND FRAILTIES. Unitarians maintain, that *Jesus* and his apostles "were supernaturally instructed, as far as was "necessary for the execution of their commission; that is, for the revelation and proof of "the doctrine of eternal life, and that the favour "of God extended to the Gentiles equally with

* *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, I. p. 2.

† *Ibid.* p. 6.

“ the Jews; and that *Jesus* and his Apostles, and
“ *others of the primitive believers*, were occasion-
“ ally inspired to foretel future events. But
“ they believe that supernatural inspiration was
“ *limited to these cases alone*; and that when
“ Jesus or his Apostles deliver opinions upon
“ subjects unconnected with the object of their
“ mission, such opinions, and their reasonings
“ upon them, are to be received with the same
“ ATTENTION and CAUTION, with those of other
“ persons, in similar circumstances, of similar
“ education, and with similar habits of think-
“ ing.” Further, he says, “ The moral charac-
“ ter of Christ, through the whole course of his
“ *publick ministry*, as recorded by the Evangel-
“ ists, is pure and unimpeachable in every par-
“ ticular. Whether this perfection of character
“ in *publick* life, combined with the general dec-
“ laration of his freedom from sin, establish, or
“ were intended to establish the fact, that *Jesus*,
“ through the whole course of his *private* life,
“ was completely exempt from all the errors and
“ frailties of human nature, is a question of *no*
“ *great intrinsick moment*, and concerning which
“ we have no sufficient data to lead to a satis-
“ factory conclusion.”* In another work, Mr.

* *Calm Inquiry into the Scripture Doctrine concerning the Per-
son of Christ.* p. 190. 447. 451.

Belsham, in consistency with the foregoing statement, observes—"Jesus is, indeed, now alive; "but as we are totally ignorant of the place where "he resides, and of the occupations in which he "is engaged, there can be no proper foundation "for *religious addresses* to him, nor of *gratitude* "for favours now received, nor yet of *confidence* "in his future interposition in our behalf."*

Unitarians with one voice, also, deny the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit. Dr. *Priestley* declares, that by the Holy Spirit we are to understand nothing more than the power or influence of God, and by no means a distinct person.† Mr. *Belsham*, with still more freedom, and less decorum, allows himself to say, "The distinct, personal existence of the "Holy Spirit, is, I believe, abandoned by every "person who has paid much attention to the "phraseology of the scriptures"—And again, "The controversy (respecting the personality of "the Holy Spirit,) is almost as much at rest as "that concerning transubstantiation."‡

* *Review of Wilberforce, &c. Letter VIII. p. 74.*

† *Hist. of the Corruptions &c. I. 88.*

‡ *Review of Wilberforce, &c. VII.*

As Unitarians reject the Divinity of Christ, so they also reject the Doctrine of HIS ATONEMENT. Dr. *Priestley* says, this doctrine is “one of the radical, as well as the most generally prevailing corruptions of the Christian scheme.” And again, he calls it, “a disgrace to Christianity, and a load upon it, which it must either throw off, or sink under.”* Further, he says, “Christ being only a man, his death could not in any proper sense of the word, atone for the sins of *other men*.”† Again, he asserts, that “in no part either of the Old or New Testament, do we ever find, asserted or explained, the principle on which the doctrine of atonement is founded: but that, on the contrary, it is a sentiment every where abounding, that repentance and A GOOD LIFE, are, OF THEMSELVES SUFFICIENT TO RECOMMEND US TO THE FAVOUR OF GOD.”‡ Mr. *Belsham*, on this subject, declares—“The death of *Jesus* is sometimes called a *propitiation*, because it put an end to the Mosaic economy, and introduced a new and more liberal dispensation,

* *Theol. Rep.* V. p. 124. 429.

† *Hist. of the Corruptions of Christianity.* I. p. 227.

‡ *Theol. Repos.* I. p. 263.

“under which the gentiles, who were before re-
 “garded as enemies, are admitted into a state of
 “amity and reconciliation; that is, into a state
 “of privilege similar to that of the Jews. It is
 “also occasionally called a *sacrifice*, being the
 “ratification of that new covenant into which
 “God is pleased to enter with his human off-
 “spring, by which a resurrection to immortal
 “life and happiness is promised, without dis-
 “tinction, to all who are truly virtuous. Believ-
 “ers in Christ are also said to have *Redemption*
 “*through his blood*, BECAUSE THEY ARE RELEA-
 “SED, BY THE CHRISTIAN COVENANT, FROM
 “THE YOKE OF THE CEREMONIAL LAW, AND
 “FROM THE BONDAGE OF IDOLATRY.”*

They further, deny *Original sin*. They
 say that all men come into the world perfectly
 innocent and pure; as entirely free from the
 least taint of moral pollution as Adam was, when
 he first came from the hands of the Creator;
 that he is by nature NO MORE INCLINED TO
 VICE THAN TO VIRTUE; that he derives from
 his ancestors a frail and mortal nature; is made
 with appetites which fit him for the condition in

* *Review of Wilberforce, &c. Letter II.*

which God has placed him; but that in order to their answering all the purposes intended, they are so strong as to be very liable to abuse by excess: that he has passions implanted in him, which are of great importance in the conduct of life; but which are equally capable of impelling him into a right or a wrong course: that he has natural affections, all of them originally good, but liable, by a wrong direction, to be the occasion of error and sin: that he has reason and conscience to direct the conduct of life, which may yet be neglected, perverted and misguided: that with all these together, he is equally capable of right or wrong, and as free to the one as to the other.*

Unitarians reject the doctrine of *justification by the merits of Christ*. To quote authorities in support of this charge is needless. All their leading writers declare, without ceremony, that the sufferings, the blood, and the righteousness of Jesus Christ, are nothing more, as to the point of our personal acceptance with God, than those of any other man. They assert that the

* See *Priestley and Belsham*—And also Professor Ware's *Lectures*, p. 20. 21.

PRACTICE OF VIRTUE is the ONLY GROUND OF HOPE ; and that any other plan of justification is unscriptural and absurd,

They believe that *all the human race will finally be saved*. This was Dr. *Priestley's* opinion. Mr. *Belsham* also expresses himself on the subject in the following terms. "We may certainly conclude that NONE OF THE CREATURES OF GOD, IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, WILL BE ETERNALLY MISERABLE. The wicked will indeed be raised to suffering ; but since eternal misery, for temporary crime, is inconsistent with every principle of justice, we are naturally led to conclude, that the sufferings of the wicked will be remedial, and that they will terminate in a complete purification from moral disorder, and in their ultimate restoration to virtue and happiness."* The truth is, that although the Unitarian PURGATORY differs in several respects from that of the *Papists*, it is nevertheless, AS REAL A PURGATORY ; having the same substantial characters, and being equally opposed to the whole current of scripture,

† *Review of Wilberforce, &c. Letter II.*

Finally ; the Unitarians *reject the inspiration of the Scriptures*. “The scriptures,” says Dr. *Priestley* were written WITHOUT “ANY PARTICULAR INSPIRATION, by men who wrote according to the best of their knowledge, and who, from their circumstances, could not be mistaken with respect to the *greater facts* of which they were proper *witnesses* ; but (like other men subject to PREJUDICE) might be liable to adopt a HASTY AND ILL-GROUNDED opinion concerning things which did not fall within the compass of their own knowledge.”* Mr. *Belsham* very explicitly tells us, that “The scriptures contain a very faithful and credible account of the *Christian doctrine*, which is the *true word of God* ; but they are not *themselves* the word of God ; nor do they ever assume that title : and it is highly improper to speak of them as such, as it leads inattentive readers to suppose they are written under a PLENARY INSPIRATION, to which they make NO PRETENSION.”†

To this list of Unitarian opinions, I might add, if it were necessary, a number of other

* *History of Early Opinions*, IV. p. 4. 5. † *Review*, &c. Letter I.

articles ; such as the *materiality of the soul* ;—the consequent denial of a *separate state*, of activity or even consciousness, between death and the resurrection ;—the denial of the existence of either *Devils* or *good Angels* ; and the rejection of all sanctity in the *Sabbath*. But my limits forbid me to multiply particulars ; and I would by no means allow myself to do any thing that might look like unduly darkening the horrid picture.

From this summary view, it is evident that Unitarianism, according to the statement of one of its most zealous friends in the *United States*, consists “rather in NOT BELIEVING ;” and that the principal difficulty which it has to encounter is to “make men zealous in REFUSING “TO BELIEVE.”* It is plain, also, that Unitarians reject EVERY ONE of what we deem the PECULIAR and ESSENTIAL doctrines of the Gospel. According to this scheme, there is no other than a mere human, fallible, and peccable Saviour ; no real *redemption by the blood of Christ* ; no justification by his merits ; no Holy Spirit to sanctify our depraved nature ; no prevailing

* Mr. Wells's Letter, contained in a “*Brief History of the Progress and Present State of the Unitarian Churches in America*.”

Intercessor; nothing that can with propriety be called GRACE: all—all is figurative, cold, inadequate and unsatisfying.

In short, Christianity, if Unitarianism be the truth, is nothing more than a republication of the religion of nature, with very small additional light. A future state, a pure morality, and the efficacy of repentance, form the sum total of its discoveries; and men are left, after all, to accomplish their own salvation.

I repeat, that you are by no means to understand me as asserting, that *all* Unitarians adopt every one of these opinions. But I have no doubt that they are all adopted by the generality of that denomination. Be not deceived, then, when the charge is denied, ever so strongly, by *individuals*, who wish to avoid the odium of sentiments which are found shocking to popular feeling. The question is, not whether *some* who call themselves, and who deserve to be called, Unitarians, believe every article in the list which I have given; but whether the leaders of their sect, at present, in *Europe* and *America*, do not, substantially, so believe; and

whether the *spirit of their system* does not go the whole length of my statetment. ' .

Such, then, is Unitarianism. How far it differs from *Deism*, I leave you to judge. Mr. *Belsham*, who is now at the head of the Unitarians in *England*, gives it as his opinion, that Unitarianism differs with respect to no important doctrine from the system of the deistical *Theophilanthropists* of *France*. Speaking of those Deists, he explicitly says, "Their professed principles comprehend the ESSENCE of the Christian religion."* And, truly, I can recollect no feature of the Christian religion admitted by Unitarians, which is not substantially admitted by serious Deists, except the divine mission of Jesus Christ, and the resurrection of the body; and *both* these are maintained by *Mohammedans*. It follows, then, that they reject ALL the PECULIAR doctrines of Christianity.—Now the question which you are called upon to decide, is, whether those who occupy this ground are CHRISTIANS, and ought to be acknowledged as such? And it is a question which can hardly fail of coming home to your consciences almost

* *Review*, p. 217.

every day that you live. You reside in the midst of Unitarians. They are daily thrown into your company. They converse on their favourite opinions. Their publications are continually offered for your perusal: and you are often tempted, if not solicited, to attend on their preaching. The questions then, how you ought to estimate their opinions; how to treat their persons; how to act with regard to their publications; how to consider their preaching; whether you ought to regard them as Christians at all; whether their congregations ought to be called Churches of Christ; and whether the ordinances which they administer, ought to be sustained as valid?—are questions which you *must* decide, at least practically. You cannot evade them. If you forbear to answer them in words, you must and will answer them by your actions. It is my confident hope that you will not attempt to evade a decision; and it is my earnest desire to aid you in deciding these momentous questions in such a manner as God and your own consciences shall approve.

The slightest glance at the subject will enable you to perceive that this is no sectarian dispute.

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It is not a controversy between *Presbyterians* and *Episcopalians*, or between *Calvinists* and *Arminians*, in which men may take different sides, and yet be equally safe with regard to their eternal prospects. Although I am a decided Calvinist, yet it would never occur to me to place the peculiarities of the Calvinistick creed among the fundamentals of our common Christianity. While it is impossible for me to be satisfied myself with a theological system which does not include them ; I find no difficulty in embracing as brethren in Christ, many who do not view them with the same eyes. But the controversy between the Orthodox and Unitarians, is of more vital and awful import. It is a controversy which relates to nothing less than the Object of our worship, and the Foundation of our hope. It is a controversy which involves a question of no less import than this—How you will regard the character and principles of those who would TAKE AWAY YOUR GOD AND SAVIOUR ; who would tear from Christianity, not merely some important parts, but the SUM TOTAL OF ITS ESSENCE ; that which alone renders it a Religion adapted to the case of miserable sinners ? I cannot suppose that you

will feel at a loss, for a moment, how this question ought to be answered. I trust that every feeling of your hearts, as well as every dictate of your understandings, will furnish a prompt and decisive reply.

My dear Brethren! in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the one living and true God, the God of the Bible, whom Unitarians reject, your Fathers believed. In the name of the ever blessed and undivided Trinity, you have all been baptized. In this adorable Trinity, the true Church of God, in all ages, as we shall see in the sequel, have steadfastly confided and rejoiced. May I not take for granted that a doctrine so obviously interesting, and so long the hope of the pious, will not be, by any who have been educated in the belief of it, lightly or hastily discarded? May I not cherish the assurance that you will inquire long, and deliberate seriously, before you will abandon YOUR FATHER'S GOD? *Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.**

* Jeremiah, VI. 16.

LETTER II.

Prejudices cherished by many against Orthodoxy—That Orthodoxy is austere and repulsive—That it lays too much stress on opinions—That it is a spirit of persecution.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

IN entering on the discussion of the points in controversy between the Orthodox and Unitarians, there are some POPULAR PREJUDICES, which continually meet us, and which seldom fail to exert an unfavourable influence on the minds of many persons who profess to be seeking the truth on this subject. I need not say that a Prejudice is an opinion taken up without solid reason or inquiry, and adhered to rather from feeling than from enlightened judgment. Nor is it necessary to remark, that prejudices ought to be carefully avoided. No man in his senses will be willing to commit himself deliberately to their guidance ; yet nothing is more

common than to be under this guidance, even on the most important of all subjects. And perhaps it may be said with truth that there are no points on which men are more peculiarly apt to give themselves up to the government of prejudices, than on those which are now under consideration; because there are none on which the feelings of the corrupt heart are more apt to rise in arms. It shall be my endeavour, in this and the next Letter, to put you on your guard against some of these prejudices, and to engage those who have hitherto indulged them, to inquire impartially before they proceed farther in this course.

I. The FIRST that I shall mention in this catalogue of PREJUDICES, is, "THAT THE ORTHODOX SYSTEM IS AUSTERE AND REPULSIVE; that it gives gloomy and discouraging views of human nature; and that the whole method of restoration to the favour and enjoyment of God which it exhibits, is humiliating and melancholy: while Unitarianism, on the contrary, represents the condition of man as much more favourable, his danger as far less, his duty as more

“easy and pleasant, and the whole aspect of religion as more attractive.”—“I always feel,” said a gay, worldly hearer, “I always feel easy and comfortable when I listen to the sermons and prayers of Unitarians. There is nothing to hurt the feelings; nothing to excite alarm; nothing to make me displeased with myself. But when I attend on the ministry of the Orthodox, I am constantly rendered uneasy by the views which they give of the condition of man, dissatisfied and anxious about myself, and discouraged at their statement of what is necessary to salvation. From the one I can always come away with a smile and a light heart; from the other, if I have listened at all, I seldom fail of coming away trembling at my danger, full of self-reproach, and feeling as if some serious and immediate measures were indispensable to my safety.”—Such was the substance of the frank confession of an individual; but the feeling which dictated it, is doubtless that of thousands. I am confident that many, for this very reason, deliberately prefer going to Unitarian places of worship; and have little doubt that others, as deliberately, resolve to cast in their lot permanently with that

denomination, rather in obedience to the feeling which has been just described, than as the result of careful, or even serious inquiry.

But, I ask, is it reasonable, is it justifiable, upon any principle, to yield to a prejudice of this kind? Is that which is most *palatable* always most *salutary*? Ought a wayward child to take for granted that that plan of education is the wisest and best, which is most lax and indulgent, most agreeable to his present feelings, and from which all painful restraint and discipline are excluded? Ought a sick man to conclude hastily that a certain physician is more skilful than any other, merely because he constantly deals in soothing and palliatives, and never administers the remedy, which, while it would give temporary pain, would also remove his disease? No; every one would say, that the folly, in both these cases, was extreme. Now we are all wayward children; and we cannot be reclaimed and led in the right way without painful discipline. We are all morally diseased; and remedies at present painful are necessary to our restoration. Should we not call that man infatuated, who desired to be soothed, flattered, and

made easy, for a few days, at the expense of years of extreme suffering? Surely, no less palpable is the infatuation of that man, who is most pleased with those who flatter and set him at ease in his sins; who resolves, antierior to all examination, to throw himself into the arms of those who tell him the most gratifying story, and predict most favourably, concerning his situation and eternal prospects.

It is undoubtedly true, that the Orthodox uniformly represent man as a sinner, a fallen, lost, miserable sinner; as guilty, and standing in need of pardon; as polluted, and standing in need of regenerating and sanctifying grace; as labouring, in his whole constitution, under a deplorable disease, from which he can obtain deliverance only through the atoning blood, and purifying Spirit of an Almighty Redeemer. And it is equally true, that they always represent the course of a sinner's return to God, and of holy obedience to his commands, as a much more humiliating, spiritual, difficult, self-denying course, than Unitarians represent it. On this diversity of representation, the first question that would occur to a wise man, is, How is

this matter to be decided? Is it by the word of God, or by the assertions of fallible men? If by the word of God, what does that unerring guide say on the subject? *To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*

. I ask you, then, my Brethren, and I entreat you to ask yourselves in the fear of God, with which of these representations do the sacred Scriptures, both in their letter and spirit, best accord? Do they teach man that he is in a state of spiritual health; that his nature is pure; that he stands in no need of the regenerating, and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit; that he can purchase pardon, if he should ever happen to need it, by his own works; that he has inherent strength to perform all that God requires; that he has no hell, or a very trivial one, to fear; and that final happiness will be attained by every man, however disobedient? Do the Scriptures teach thus? Do they thus throw the Saviour and the Holy Spirit into the shade, and make salvation an unmeaning term? Or do they teach directly the reverse of all this? Let not your *feelings* decide these questions. This

would be like making a culprit at the bar both juror and judge in his own case. But let enlightened, impartial *conscience*, with the word of God in your hands, give the answer. What will it avail you, in the great day of trial, to find that you have been flattered by *blind leaders of the blind*, and have set at naught the plain, repeated, solemn declarations of that word, which was given to *guide you into the way of peace*, and which will be the great standard of judgment in that day?

But is the system of the Unitarians *really* more favourable to comfort of mind than that of the Orthodox? "Is that system "gloomy" and "full of horrors," which directs the guilty and "burdened mind to a Saviour, who is described "by the inspiration of God, as ABLE TO SAVE TO "THE UTTERMOST; or that which must consign "us to all the miseries of despondency and despair, by representing this Saviour as a mere "man—a *fallible, peccable* man—a man liable to "*ignorance, prejudice, and sin*?" Is not the latter, in fact, like every other deceiver, though smiling and flattering in its aspect, utterly hostile to true enjoyment? Read the XIIth of the excellent

Letters of Dr. FULLER, on the Calvinistick and Socinian Systems compared; and I have no doubt you will be fully convinced that the system of the Orthodox is, in every view, most friendly to peace of conscience, to habitual tranquility and cheerfulness of mind, and to that genuine spiritual joy, which flows from the richest consolations, and the purest and most exalted hopes. Like a faithful physician, it wounds but to heal; like a precious medicine of life, it gives temporary pain, but to produce infinitely more than a counterbalance of health and comfort in the end. It is not, indeed, and it is one of its glories that it is not, friendly to carnal and grovelling joys; to those which are connected with the theatre, the card-table, the midnight revel, or any scene of unhallowed sensuality. It boasts of no power to place men at ease in their sins, or to say, *Peace, peace, when there is no peace.* On the contrary, it ever tends to make wicked men deeply anxious and apprehensive, as they ought to be. It allows none to be tranquil and happy but those who have forsaken sin, and become true penitents and believers in Christ. But to the humble, the contrite, and the obedient believer, it speaks peace, and comfort and blessed-

ness: it presents a foundation of hope of the most firm and ample kind; it elevates the soul with the assurance of God's love; imparts to it a *peace which passeth all understanding*, and spreads before it the most animating and transforming prospects for the life to come. I do consider the undoubted fact, that Unitarianism allows all classes of men, even those against whom the word of God denounces the most awful threatenings, to dismiss all anxiety about their condition, and to live at ease, as one of the most conclusive symptoms of its anti-christian character. That system cannot be of God, which, in proportion as it takes more full possession of the mind, renders it more firmly attached to worldly pursuits and pleasures, more at ease in a licentious course, less inclined to the duties of devotion, and more reluctant to think of death and eternity. "I should like," said one of the shrewdest men in our country, on being asked, after his return from hearing the most popular Unitarian preacher then in *Boston*, how he was pleased with him, "I should like," said he, "always to hear such preaching, if I were 'sure I was never to die.'"

II. A SECOND Prejudice against which I wish to put you on your guard, is expressed in various terms ; but the substance of it is, "THAT THE ORTHODOX ATTACH TOO MUCH IMPORTANCE TO THE POINTS IN CONTROVERSY BETWEEN THEM AND THE UNITARIANS." Many are willing to allow that Unitarians are wrong—sadly wrong ;—but that they should be regarded as so ESSENTIALLY wrong, as to endanger their eternal salvation, to preclude all ecclesiastical intercourse with them, and even to render it improper to give them the name of Christian ;—they consider as going by much too far ; as a sort of theological extravagance, rather fitted to exasperate feelings, and make infidels, than promote the cause of truth and charity. Accordingly, the minds of such persons are not a little wounded, when they hear the errors of Unitarians denounced as "dreadful" and "soul destroying." They imagine that more mild and inoffensive language would better accord with the spirit of the Gospel. These impressions, in many, are rendered still more deep and unfavourable, when they observe that Unitarians commonly profess to speak a very different language ; that they plume themselves on their

“liberality;” that they profess to be ever ready to respect as pious, and to receive to the arms of their “charity,” all classes of men who assume the Christian name; and that they consider no difference whatever, on the score of doctrine, as sufficient to preclude ecclesiastical communion.

Before you allow yourselves, my Christian Brethren, to countenance, in the least degree, this prejudice, I beg your candid attention to a few remarks, which I hope will convince you, that the common cry against the Orthodox, of “UNCHARITABLENESS,” is one of the most unfounded and unreasonable that ever obtained currency in a deluded world.

I am sensible that we are not, in all cases, capable of deciding what doctrines are to be considered as absolutely essential to Christianity, and what doctrines, though important, are of secondary moment. Hence the wisest and profoundest divines have always regarded the task of making a list of the fundamental truths of religion, as a very delicate and difficult one. But with respect to *some* doctrines, there can be no hesitation in deciding, that if there

be *any such thing* as fundamental truths, these belong to the number. Of this number, the Orthodox have always been persuaded, is the doctrine of the true and proper Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who admit this doctrine, and build their whole system upon it; and those who totally reject it, can never worship or commune together. It will be easy, I think, to make it appear that they are of different religions; and that to consider it in any other light, is a perversion of reason as well as of scripture.

The Orthodox assuredly believe, that man is a guilty, depraved and ruined creature, by nature as well as by practice. They believe that there is no other way by which he can regain the favour and image of his Maker, than by the atoning blood, and sanctifying Spirit of the eternal Son of God. They are persuaded, moreover, that it is the union of Divinity and humanity in the adorable Person of the Saviour, that makes his atoning sacrifice infinitely meritorious, and that stamps infinite sufficiency, efficacy, and glory on his righteousness. And they believe, with equal confidence, that without an humble and cordial reception of this great Mediator, as

the Lord our righteousness, and the Lord our strength, as the foundation of our hope, and the life of our souls, there is no vital union to Him ; no interest in his atonement ; no salvation. But all this Unitarians reject as a vain delusion, and denounce as gross idolatry. In their view, man stands in no need of a Redeemer, and Jesus Christ is nothing more than a mere human teacher. Now I ask, can these two parties consider their points of difference as of a minor sort, or reconcilable ? When the question is, whether the Saviour in whom I put my trust, is a Divine being, or only a man, like myself ; whether He is a mere creature, or the uncreated God, the Maker and Governor of all worlds ; whether He is to be honoured and worshipped as my Almighty Deliverer from sin and death, or only respected as a mere human preacher of mercy—when *these* are the questions to be asked, can those who answer them not only DIFFERENTLY, but OPPOSITELY, be of the same religion, or worship in the same temple ? Impossible ! The objects of their worship are different ; the grounds of their confidence are different ; the whole current of their exercises, and of their language, in contemplating and in seeking

salvation, must be entirely different. - They who adopt the erroneous side, substitute ANOTHER GOSPEL, nay, it is not too much to say, ANOTHER GOD, in place of the Gospel and the God of the Bible. As well might light and darkness be expected to agree. Either the Orthodox must be involved in the dreadful guilt of worshipping a creature instead of the Creator; or the Unitarians in the no less shocking guilt of *denying the Lord that bought us*, and habitually blaspheming that *Name which is above every name*. Can this difference be a matter of small moment? Is it easy, nay is it *possible* to "make too much" of it—to "attach too much importance" to it? I could just as soon believe that the points in controversy between the Christian and the Atheist are trivial matters, and that both might, with perfect comfort, worship in the same sanctuary, and commune at the same table!

Before any one, then, can reasonably find fault with the Orthodox for laying too much stress on the opinions in controversy between them and Unitarians, he must first assume as a conceded fact that the opinions of the Orthodox are false. For if they are admitted to be true,

(and surely the Orthodox believe them to be so) then all the important consequences which we contemplate must, demonstrably, flow from them. If the children of men BE lost and perishing sinners;—if we essentially need pardon and sanctification;—if the eternal Son of God became incarnate that he might be made an atoning sacrifice for our sins;—if there be NO OTHER WAY in which forgiveness and purity can be imparted to us, than by the obedience, the sufferings, and the Spirit of an Almighty Redeemer;—if the plan of salvation adopted by infinite Wisdom be a plan, not of WORKS, but of MERE GRACE;—and if we must receive it with humble gratitude, as a system of grace, or perish;—then, I ask, do we attach unwarrantable importance to these truths, when we represent the reception of them as essential to salvation, and consider those who reject them as unworthy of the Christian name? If they be true, all this follows of course. “Let none persuade you
“then, my friends, that the doctrine of the
“Trinity is a matter of curiosity and speculation only. OUR RELIGION IS FOUNDED UPON
“IT. For what is Christianity but a manifestation of the three Divine Persons as engaged in

“the great work of man’s redemption, begun,
 “continued, and to be ended by them, in their
 “several relations of Father, Son and Holy
 “Ghost; Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier;
 “three Persons in one God? If there be no Son
 “of God, WHERE IS OUR REDEMPTION? If there
 “be no Holy Spirit, WHERE IS OUR SANCTIFI-
 “CATION? Without both, WHERE IS OUR SAL-
 “VATION? And if these two Persons be any
 “thing less than Divine, why are we baptized
 “equally in the name of the Father, and of the
 “Son, and of the Holy Ghost? Let no man,
 “therefore, deceive you. *This is the true God*
 “and eternal life.”*

Accordingly, let me entreat you, my Brethren,
 to appeal to the unerring Word of God, and
 see whether the true doctrine concerning the
 Person and work of Christ, is not there repre-
 sented as that great fundamental matter, on
 which the whole fabrick of Christianity, and all
 our hopes for eternity must rest. The Saviour
 himself expressly declares, *that all men should*
honour the Son even as they honour the Father.
He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the

* Bishop HONAX’s Discourses on the Trinity.

*Father which hath sent him.** The Apostle Peter speaks thus—*But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false prophets among you, who privily shall bring in DAMNABLE HERESIES, even DENYING THE LORD THAT BOUGHT THEM, and bring upon themselves SWIFT DESTRUCTION.†* The Apostle John, amidst all the tenderness, and benevolence which so strikingly characterize his writings, declares—*He that abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed, is a partaker of his evil deeds.‡* Again, it is said, *who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.§* Again, another inspired Apostle pronounces, *As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.||* Again, we are assured, *Other foundation can no man lay but that which is laid,*

* John V. 22. 23. † II. Peter II. 1. ‡ II. John 9.

§ I. John II. 22. 23. || Galatians, I. 9.

*which is Jesus Christ ;** and concerning himself our blessed Lord solemnly pronounces, *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*† —Now, whatever doubt may exist as to the import of these passages in other respects, one thing is plain. They unquestionably teach that the true doctrine concerning Christ is ESSENTIAL TO CHRISTIANITY, and that a rejection of it is nothing less than an anti-christian departure from the faith.

Let not, then, the charge of want of “charity,” or laying a “bigotted” and unreasonable stress on a particular set of opinions, alarm you. As long as you are borne out by the word of God, you may be perfectly content under charges of this kind. Why should we disguise the truth, or deceive ourselves or others concerning this matter? Why should we be led away, under the pretence of “liberality” or “benevolence,” to give up that which is essential to the life of our souls? Is it real “charity” to our fellow men to allow them to be hoodwinked and deceived, nay directly to help to blind and embolden them, in rushing on to their own destruction?

* I. Cor. III. 11. † John VIII. 24.

Is it real "charity" to tell men that an error is non-essential, and that there is no danger in adopting it, when Jehovah has pronounced that it is "damnable," and brings upon those who adopt it, "swift destruction?" O my Friends, the folly of desiring Ministers to *prophecy smooth things* in such a case, is of the most extreme and wonderful kind! To give the name of christian "benevolence" and "charity" to conduct which is calculated eternally to destroy all who are influenced by it, is, of all perversions, both of language and of principle, one of the most enormous!

Nor let it be forgotten, while we are on this branch of the subject, that Unitarians themselves were *once* accustomed to speak a very different language, on the points in controversy between them and the Orthodox, from that which they now commonly employ. Now they endeavour to make you believe that the questions in dispute between them are not fundamental; that they are matters of doubtful speculation, about which good men may entertain very different opinions, without separating from each other. But they have not been always in the habit of

speaking thus: and I am persuaded I do them no injustice when I express a suspicion, that they sometimes, at least, speak thus to serve a turn. Formerly they were accustomed to maintain, that the doctrines of the Divinity of Christ, and of the Trinity in Unity, ought to be considered, not only as the most outrageous of all absurdities, but as among the most pestiferous of all errors; that they are directly contrary to every sound principle of natural and revealed religion; that those who embrace them, make more Gods than one; that they are guilty of a shocking breach of the first Commandment, and are chargeable with the sin of gross idolatry. This was the habitual language of the Unitarians, until within a few years. *Faustus Socinus* himself speaks on the subject in this strain. Though he believed Christ to be a mere man, yet he maintained, with the most ardent zeal, that he ought to be worshipped. He expressly says, that, "to deny worship to him, is not a simple error, or a mere mistake; but a most pernicious error; an error which leads to Judaism, and is, in effect, denying Christ; that it tends to Epicurianism, and even to ATHEISM." And to shew that he was really in

earnest, in believing as he taught, he and his friend *Blandrata* persecuted poor *Davidias*, in a manner which issued in his miserable death, because he could not be brought to teach or admit, as they did, that a mere man ought to be worshipped. *Smalcius*, another Socinian, expressly says, that they are NO CHRISTIANS who refuse to give divine worship to Christ. And, in the spirit of these declarations, some of the most distinguished English Unitarians have, within a few years, used language quite as decisive and "uncharitable" as any that the most thorough-going Calvinists have ever employed. They have called upon their followers to "come out from Babylon;" to "separate themselves from idolaters;" have publicly declared that the separation of Unitarians from Trinitarians is as obviously proper and necessary as was the separation of Protestants from the church of Rome; and they have not scrupled to stigmatize the Orthodox continually as "Polytheists," "Idolaters," "Blasphemers," &c. This is "laying stress" with a witness on doctrinal opinions! It is hoped that no Unitarian, hereafter, will ever find fault with the Orthodox for considering the Divinity and worship of Christ

as *essentials* in the Gospel of his grace, and for maintaining that they are NO CHRISTIANS who reject them.

Dr. *Priestley* himself says, "If there ever
" was any such thing as *idolatry*, it is paying
" religious worship to any other than the one
" only living and true God; and if it be of any
" consequence to preserve inviolate the first ar-
" ticle of all revealed religion, viz. the unity
" of God, and the exclusive worship of Him,
" (which was the one great object of the Jewish
" religion, and continues to be so in the Chris-
" tian) it must be incumbent upon us to frequent
" no society of christians, however pious and
" sincere they may be, if we be convinced they
" err in so essential an article of faith as this.
" It is innocent in them who are ignorant, and
" act agreeably to their consciences; but it is
" criminal in us who know better. There are,
" no doubt, differences in lesser matters, which
" may be borne with in members of the same
" society; but if ANY difference in opinion and
" practice will justify a SEPARATION, it must
" be THIS. That such a corrupt mode of reli-
" gion is enjoined by the civil powers under

“ which we live, will no more authorize or excuse our conformity to it, than the same considerations would have justified the primitive Christians in conforming to the rites of the PAGAN WORSHIP, which were enjoined by the laws of the Roman empire. The answer of the apostles, *Peter* and *John*, to the Jewish High Priest, should be adopted by all christians: *We ought to obey God rather than man.*”*

It is true that modern Unitarians, while they adopt this language, profess to feel kindly towards their orthodox neighbours, and not to suppose that their opinions will be destructive of their final safety: nay, some Unitarians do not even deny the christian character of the orthodox, on account of their alledged idolatry. But how this is to be accounted for, I will not undertake to decide; unless, indeed it be supposed, as I am rather inclined to think, with the late excellent Mr. *Fuller*, we ought to suppose, that “no reason can be assigned for it, excepting their

* *Introductory Essay to Forms of Prayer for the use of Unitarian Societies.* 8 vo. 1783.

“indifference to truth, and the deistical turn of
“their sentiments.”*

Unitarians, indeed, pretty generally disclaim the opinion, that ANY particular belief is necessary to salvation: and, in truth, it must be so, for they are generally believers in the doctrine of *universal salvation*. Such persons are, of course, persuaded that no departure from the truth, either in faith or practice, not even atheism itself, or the most fiend-like abominations in conduct, can eternally destroy any one. But I leave you to say, how this opinion can be reconciled with such declarations as the following—*If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. He that hath the Son hath life; but he that hath not the Son, hath not life. He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life; but he that believeth not on the Son of God, SHALL NOT SEE LIFE, but the WRATH OF GOD ABIDETH UPON HIM.*

As to the suggestion sometimes made, especially by weak and superficial writers, that confidently believing and pronouncing the reception

* FULLER'S *Calvinistick and Socinian systems compared, &c.* Letter 10th.

of certain opinions necessary to salvation, involves a claim approaching, if not amounting, to something like *papal infallibility* ; it is really too silly to need a formal refutation. The plain import of the suggestion, is neither more nor less than this, that humbly to credit God's word, and to believe and pronounce that to be necessary to salvation, which the great Author of salvation has declared to be so, is presumptuously setting up our own notions as an infallible rule of faith. If this be reasonable, or if it deserve any respectful name, I know not what deserves to be considered as supremely preposterous. If I know what the most arrogant, daring, impious assumption of more than "papal infallibility" of which fallen man is capable, is, it is undertaking to pronounce *that* a trifle which the infinite God has pronounced all-important ; and that unessential to the safety of man, which HE has declared to be the foundation of all christian hope.

III. . A THIRD Prejudice, closely allied with the preceding, is, "that undertaking to denounce "Unitarianism, as not only a dangerous but also "a destructive heresy ; and to exclude those who "embrace it from our communion, and all

“ecclesiastical intercourse, is really nothing less than PERSECUTION; and if so, contrary to the “spirit of the Gospel.” That we should have our own private thoughts of any system of heresy, and should privately warn against its fascinations, those with whom we may have influence, is acknowledged by most persons to be a christian right; but that we should publicly, openly, and continually, hold up a particular heresy, from the pulpit and the press, as *anti-christian* and *destructive*, and thus habitually endeavour to draw upon it the abhorrence of all who believe our representations, is considered, even by some who are not willing to be accounted friends of the heresy in question, as partaking of the nature of that spirit of persecution, which, as protestants, we all profess to reprobate. But this is a mere prejudice, which a little consideration will serve effectually to remove.

What is *persecution*, as applied to the subject of religion? It is pursuing men with personal malignity and bitterness, subjecting them to civil penalties, and offering violence to their persons or property, on account of their religious opinions. Happily the government under which

God has cast our lot, does not admit of subjecting any man to civil penalties on account of his religion, unless that religion lead him to disturb the peace of society. No violence can be offered either to the person or the property of any one, for any modification of religious belief, however shocking, as long as he remains a quiet, orderly citizen. Of persecution such as this, no person, it is presumed, in our country, has any reason to complain. But, supposing we may call,—as I believe we may call—that man *persecuted*, who, on account of his religious opinions, is loaded with calumny and abuse, hunted down with slander and reproachful names ; and either shut out from the offices of social kindness, or driven from his residence, by the unrelenting intolerance of public opinion. In short, where personal or social vengeance is wreaked on the *person* of a supposed heretick, instead of a decent refutation of his *opinions* ; or where even his *opinions* are visited with a violence and outrage, inconsistent with the laws of christian benevolence—*there* is “persecution.” Publick sentiment, and individual abuse, may, no doubt, as really persecute, as the magistrate, who spills the blood, incarcerates the body, or seizes the property of

an alledged heretick. But is any individual or community in our country, chargeable with persecution even of this kind? I know of no example of it; and, unless I am deceived, should be as ready to join in heartily condemning it, as any Unitarian in the land.

Is it "persecution" to pronounce a set of opinions unscriptural, and destructive to the souls of men, if we really think them so? Is it "persecution" to warn those around us against a heresy which we unfeignedly believe that the Holy Ghost hath pronounced "damnable?" Then no man can preach the gospel with fidelity without being a persecutor. Nay, if this be so, no one of the inspired Apostles ever did preach it without laying himself open to this charge. In short, if this principle be admitted, it is persecution to warn our neighbours against a prowling thief, a secret incendiary, or a midnight assassin. But can any man reconcile such a doctrine with scripture, or even common sense? In denouncing Unitarianism, then, and in opposing it with scriptural weapons, we humbly conceive, we are not liable to the charge of persecution. We do not offer personal violence to its advocates. We

have no desire to injure them in their secular business, or to deprive them of a single comfort in society. We should think ourselves guilty of a baseness unworthy of the cause which we plead, were we to assail their *private characters*, or direct toward their *persons* the language of reproach. On the contrary, we consider it as our duty to perform to them every office of christian benevolence; to be careful of their good name; and to be ready to promote their temporal and eternal welfare, by all the means in our power. Nay, while we disclaim all hostility to their *persons*, we oppose even their *opinions* with no other weapons than those of scripture and argument. Must we, notwithstanding, be still branded as "persecutors?" Must it still be often more than intimated, that nothing but the "power" is wanting, on the part of Trinitarians, to renew the tragedy of *Servetus* and others, in the sixteenth century? Where is the "liberality," the justice, or even the decorum of such charges? It is difficult to repel them without the use of epithets, which the christian would wish to exclude even from his controversial vocabulary.

If the notions of some of our Unitarian neighbours concerning persecution, be correct, then

they have been themselves, for sometime, in the habit of persecuting the Orthodox ; for they have not hesitated to hold up them and their opinions to publick view in a most odious light, and to ascribe to both a most pestiferous character. Again ; if these notions be correct, then, too, Dr. *Priestley*, and Mr. *Belsham*, and other champions of Unitarianism, were in the constant habit, for many years, and some of them continue in the habit, of “persecuting” the Orthodox of *Great Britain*, in publicly stigmatizing them as “polytheists,” “idolaters,” and “blasphemers.” But did the Orthodox ever call this “persecution?” I never heard of such a charge. They were too candid and too reasonable ever to think of it. Nay more ; I have long known that the Pagans persecuted the primitive Christians. But I never supposed that the primitive Christians persecuted the Pagans, under whose government they lived : yet they certainly did, with the utmost plainness and fidelity, proclaim to their Pagan neighbours, that Paganism was a most false and corrupt system, poisonous to the morals, and destructive to the souls of its adherents. Was this “persecution?”

And here I am forcibly reminded of what occurred between the Christians and the Pagans, in the early periods of the church. The Pagans had been long accustomed, without the least difficulty, to tolerate each other. So obscure were their views of truth, and so slight their impressions of its importance, that the prevalent idea among them seems to have been, that almost all sects were equally right, and equally safe; that they all had truth enough in their respective systems to answer the great purposes of religion; and that, therefore, they ought to live together without the least disposition to impeach the standing or the prospects of each other. These being the current opinions, and the established habits of Pagans, it might have been expected that, when Christianity appeared, and began to attract publick notice, they would have regarded and treated it with the same indulgence that they were accustomed to exercise towards one another. But it proved to be entirely otherwise. The Christians were utterly prohibited by their religion from acceding to that principle of indiscriminate reciprocity with all other sects, which Paganism allowed. They steadfastly maintained, as the bible taught them, that all who

rejected the religion of Christ, were aliens from God: they called upon all men every where to repent, to turn from their dumb idols, and carnal ordinances, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation; and proclaimed, that all who failed to comply with this command, incurred the most dreadful guilt and danger; and, continuing so, must perish eternally. The blinded Pagans construed this honest fidelity, on the part of christians, into an evidence of enmity to mankind. Their holy zeal in beseeching men to *flee from the wrath to come*, was considered as indicating a malignant spirit; and that which ought to have been recognized as the purest benevolence, was reviled as the bitterest and most merciless bigotry! The consequences were melancholy. Both government and people persecuted the christians with unrelenting fury; they were hunted like beasts of prey; their blood flowed in every direction; and that they were not exterminated from the earth, was not owing to the charity or the forbearance of those whom they sought to save.

Such has been the spirit of the enemies of the truth in all ages; and such it is at this hour.

To every form of error they are indulgent. When any modification of heresy presents itself, however widely it may differ from their own, it appears as if the milk of kindness were the very element of their souls. Even the tenets of the mortal deist, though allowed to be erroneous and to be deplored, are yet spoken of in the language of forbearance and commiseration, rather than of heavy censure, or of solemn warning. But let Orthodoxy make her appearance ; and however mild her language, or respectful her address, not only the frown of disapprobation is visible ; but all the vials of wrath are poured out upon her. She is loaded with opprobrious epithets ; and appears to be really regarded as the most odious and dangerous of all adversaries.

I do not say that all who are called Unitarians manifest this temper towards Orthodoxy. But I do say, without fear of contradiction, that this spirit of ancient Paganism is very strikingly exhibited by the great majority of those Unitarians with whose persons or writings I have been acquainted. They have appeared willing to tolerate every thing excepting the truth. But when Christ was to be opposed, or his truth sacrificed,

Herod and Pilate, by whatever names they were called, have been ever ready to *make friends together*. On this fact I make no further comment. You will judge for yourselves whether it is characteristick of *the spirit of truth*, or of *the spirit of error*.

After all, it cannot be denied, that Orthodoxy, both in her doctrinal opinions, and her practical spirit, has been considered, in all ages, by Unitarians, and indeed by the children of this world generally, as austere, bigotted, and even intolerant. So it was, as every one may see from the New Testament, in the days of *Paul*; So it was in the days of *Irenæus*, *Tertullian* and *Cyprian*. So it was when the *Waldenses* exhibited their testimony in the cause of holiness, as well as of truth. So it is at the present day; and so it must be in the very nature of things. In the eyes of a dissipated and profligate child, the most affectionate parent who wishes to restrain and reform him, is an enemy to his happiness; his commands are unreasonable, and his controul hateful tyranny. In the view of the lawless invader of the publick peace, the conscientious and faithful magistrate, who loves and enforces

the principles of social order, appears an odious despot, a foe to all rational enjoyment. For this I know of no remedy, but the conversion of the deluded. When his eyes are opened, THEN and not before, he will see, that what he thought tyranny, was benevolent regulation; and what he loathed, as unfriendly to enjoyment, was most directly fitted to promote his temporal as well as his eternal happiness.

LETTER III.

*Subject continued—Fourth prejudice,—against every thing
Mysterious in religion—Fifth prejudice,—the Authority
of Great Names.*

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

I have not yet done with the Prejudices which set themselves in array against humble and candid inquiry on the subject in which we are engaged. Two more remain to be considered.—

IV. The FOURTH which I shall mention is, the disposition in multitudes to REVOLT AT THE SUGGESTION OF ANY THING MYSTERIOUS IN RELIGION. This prejudice and outcry against MYSTERY, are among the weapons which Unitarians most frequently employ against Orthodoxy; and at which many who call themselves Orthodox are often perplexed, and at a loss to answer. The substance of the objection commonly made on this subject, may be thus expressed—

“The term *Revelation* is only applicable to
“those things which are *made known*, conse-
“quently which are brought down to a level
“with our reason, that is, which may be com-
“prehended. What is not brought down to a
“level with our rational powers, cannot be un-
“derstood, and of course, is no revelation to us.
“Did the Gospel really contain doctrines above
“reason, it would, so far, cease to be a divine
“revelation. We may also safely conclude, that,
“as the Gospel was originally preached to the
“poor, and intended more especially for them;
“as it is a revelation to babes in knowledge, it
“cannot be supposed to contain any mysterious
“or incomprehensible doctrine. Nay, to be-
“lieve a doctrine which we cannot comprehend,
“is impossible and absurd. We may *say* we
“believe it; but we cannot really believe it, be-
“cause we know not what it is. And if we say
“we believe what we do not understand, we, in
“fact, say we believe we know not what; and
“how, in that case, are we either to explain or
“give a reason for what we believe. It is im-
“possible; Where Mystery begins, faith and
“religion end.”

remark which I have to offer on this which, in truth, scarcely deserves to be said, is, that if it prove any thing, it proves far too much. It will banish from the world many articles of belief, and in his senses thinks of doubting, and rejecting. In fact, upon the principles of reasoning just detailed, a man can know nothing, or next to nothing; for, assuming that there is nothing either in nature or in the mind, or in creation or in providence, he cannot fully explain. Mystery surrounds our path, wherever we go; and every subject that comes before our minds, whether physical, moral, after we proceed a very few steps, is met by impenetrable mystery. We are indubitable, but the *manner* in which things exist as facts, the *process* by which they are brought about, and the *reasons* of that, are alike wholly unknown. The truth is, that we are allowed to man in the present state to observe *effects*; to observe *facts*; to arrange them in the best order, and to make the most of them, that he can; that he knows how far similar effects may be expected in given circumstances, and thus be able

to apply them to purposes of practical utility. He can do no more. He may talk in proud and pompous language of unfolding and explaining the secrets of nature, and may sometimes imagine that he has really done so: but it is an entire mistake. Still all that he knows is a few facts. Of the *essence* of things, or of the *nature of causation*, in any case, he knows nothing—literally nothing.

To *reveal*, then, does not signify in all cases, or, indeed, in almost any case, to *explain*. Any thing may be revealed, and remain a profound mystery still. When the discoverer of the Magnet brought to light a series of facts concerning that wonderful influence, he may be said to have *revealed* to men a knowledge of them. But did he *explain* them? Have they *ever* been explained to the present hour? Why does the magnetick needle point to the poles? Why does it, in any case, deviate from the true meridian? Why do some of its known and registered laws differ so entirely from those of all other substances with which we are acquainted? To these inquiries the most acute philosophers have nothing to reply. The principles upon which the phenomena

in question rest, are still hidden from our view, by a veil which no man has been able to penetrate. Yet no man thinks of doubting the facts alluded to, or of questioning the great utility of the knowledge of them to mankind. And, for any thing we know, both the persons and the property of men, may be transported across oceans just as safely, and as expeditiously, with our present scanty knowledge, as if we were able to go to the bottom of the subject. In like manner, *the wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof; but whence it cometh, or whither it goeth;* what is the source of its endless variations, and what the rules, if there be any, by which we might calculate them, no student of this branch of natural history, that I have ever heard of, (though some of the shrewdest and closest observers that ever lived have been busy on the subject for near sixty centuries) has hitherto imagined he was able to tell. But, while all this is covered with mystery, the mariner spreads his canvass to the gale without hesitation, and receives all the benefit of its impulse; in traversing the deep, perhaps just as well, as if he knew all that is knowable on the subject. The same train of remark might be

applied to *Electricity* and *Chemistry*, each of which is really a little world of mysteries; and of both which all that we can say is, that an assemblage of facts is revealed, or made known; but that we are not able to explain one of them, or approach to an explanation.

Again; does any one doubt the propriety of saying that many of the attributes of God are *revealed* to us in his word? Yet no one means by this that revelation enables us to *comprehend* them; but only that it asserts the *fact* that such perfections *exist* in Jehovah, and makes a practical application of them. For example, that God is OMNIPRESENT, revelation distinctly and frequently affirms. But does it *explain* this attribute of the Supreme Being? Does any man think of comprehending it? Should we not consider that man as insane, who should talk of being able to comprehend it? What do we mean, then, when we say that this doctrine is *revealed*? We certainly mean nothing more than that we are assured the *fact exists*, as before suggested. In like manner, the Unitarians, as well as the Orthodox, are accustomed to say, that the scriptures reveal a future world of bliss and glory,

prepared for the righteous, after death; and also inform us that the happiness of that world will exceed our highest conceptions. But do we comprehend that *exceeding and eternal weight of glory*? How does the disembodied spirit, after death, travel to that world? How does it perceive and enjoy the unutterable glories of heaven, without bodily organs, which are the inlets to our principal pleasures, and the instruments by which the soul acts, in the present life? How will all the activity, and the intercourse, and the services of that exalted state be carried on? Above all, what is comprehended in *seeing God face to face, and knowing as we are known*? I profess not to be able to explain one of these glorious realities; while yet we all admit that the general facts are undoubtedly "revealed." These things are not, indeed, incomprehensible in their own nature; but only by us, as long as we are in the body. Glorified saints comprehend them entirely; and so will saints now on earth, by and by, when their faculties are enlarged. But even glorified saints are, probably, not able to comprehend many things which are easily comprehended by *Gabriel*. But as God is a Being who has no parallel

in the Universe; and as our knowledge of all beings must be derived through the medium of analogy, that is by means of some other being, with which we are more familiar; so it is certain that, to eternity, the most exalted creature will see many glories in Jehovah which he will be forever unable to comprehend.

Now, to apply all this to the case in hand. We say, that the one only living and true God exists in a Trinity of Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy-Ghost; that the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; that the Son is, in a mysterious manner, eternally begotten of the Father, and is a Divine Person, equal with the Father; that the Holy-Ghost is also a Divine Person, proceeding from the Father and the Son, from all eternity; and that these Three are One, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. We think that the scriptures reveal this mode of the Divine existence, that is, declare the fact, without explaining it; and, on the authority of scripture alone, we believe the fact, simply as revealed, while we confess ourselves utterly unable to comprehend it. We do not suppose that any man on earth ever did,

or ever can, understand this august mystery: Whether glorified spirits, or angels around the throne of God comprehend it, we pretend not to conjecture; although we have no doubt that many things relating to the Divine mode of existence will be, to the most exalted principalities and powers in heaven, entirely and forever incomprehensible; and for any thing we can tell to the contrary, that under consideration may be among the number.

But, however mysterious this fact, as to the mode of the Divine existence may be, it is not more incomprehensible than the Divine Omnipresence, and other attributes of the Godhead, which are revealed in scripture, and which Unitarians no more than others ever think of calling in question. It is said to be utterly incredible that any being should be One and Three at the same time. There is said to be an absurdity—a self-evident, mathematical absurdity, in the very proposition; and no one, our opponents alledge, can be required to believe that which is, in the very nature of things, and in terms, a manifest absurdity. They confess that we may believe, that which is *above* reason, but not that

which is plainly and undoubtedly *contrary* to reason. But does not all this presumptuous language arise from our venturing to do, what the scriptures expressly and strongly condemn, viz. considering God as a being *altogether such an one as ourselves*? When the Most High speaks of himself to mortals, it must be in the language of mortals. But shall we not certainly and greatly err if we interpret that language as meaning, when applied to Jehovah, the same thing that it means when applied to ourselves? Yet is not this error the foundation of the whole objection? When it is objected that the doctrine of the Trinity is contrary to reason, what is meant? Does the objector mean, that the doctrine is contrary to the nature of things; contrary to reason, as it exists in the infinite and eternal Mind? If this be his meaning, the assertion is utterly denied. He does not understand what the nature of things is; and, of course, is not qualified, unless to a very small extent, to pronounce what is, or is not, contrary to it. Until he is able to comprehend the NATURE OF ALL THINGS, and among others, of GOD HIMSELF, he surely ought to be cautious in pronouncing what is irreconcilable with reason.

But if he mean, that the doctrine in question is contrary to *his* reason ;—contrary to *his* narrow, unphilosophical prejudices, which render him unwilling to allow any thing in God which he does not perceive in himself, or in creatures,—then, it may indeed be so, that the doctrine in question cannot be reconciled with such reason ; but this, I humbly conceive, will be no solid objection to it with any reasonable man.

On account of the poverty of language, we are obliged to express our ideas of the Divine simplicity by the term UNITY. Perhaps it is the best word for the purpose that language affords. But before any one undertakes to decide that a Trinity of Persons in God is inconsistent with the Divine Unity, he ought to be able to tell us WHAT UNITY IS. But is any man able to do this? Most people are, probably, ready to suppose, at first view, that this is an easy task ; that the idea expressed by this word is so plain, simple, and perfectly intelligible, that there is no difficulty in defining it aright. But I suspect that the more an enlightened and acute mind contemplates the subject, the more he will be inclined to believe, that, like the

subject of *personal identity*, and some others of similar character, there is a difficulty in comprehending and stating it, which is almost, if not altogether insuperable. An individual man is *one*;—yet he is made up of soul and body, and some say of a third part, called spirit; each having its distinct and appropriate nature. But does this two-fold, or three-fold nature interfere with his unity? I presume no one will suppose it does. But why not, on the principle of the objection which I am repelling? A machine is *one*, though made up of a number of parts. In what sense is *Unity* applied here? A Legislative body is *one*, though composed of many members. What is meant by *unity* in this case? We are accustomed to say, and I believe that, in mechanical philosophy, it is a true saying, that more than one substance cannot occupy the same space at the same time? But are we sure that this axiom has any application to *spirit*—and, above all, that it applies to that INFINITE SPIRIT, who is every where equally present? In short, if we cannot tell what UNITY means; if we find ourselves utterly perplexed when we undertake to define what ONENESS, in the abstract, implies, and especially what it means

when ascribed to the GREAT ETHERNAL, who is exalted above all blessing, and all praise; we surely cannot be prepared to decide how far a Trinity of Persons in the Divine Essence is inconsistent with it, and involves any thing like an absurdity or contradiction.

But further; suppose we were able to comprehend and define perfectly what *Unity* means, and to remove every difficulty on that score; has any Trinitarian ever said that the Deity is *one* in the *same sense* in which He is *three*? If any thing of this kind had ever been asserted, it might be called a contradiction. But this, it is well known, is explicitly disavowed, and the contrary asserted, by all sober believers in the doctrine of the Trinity; and how far it is consistent with candour and honesty, in disputants on the Unitarian side, to be perpetually recurring to an implied charge on this subject, for which there is no foundation, I shall not at present stop to inquire. Let it be distinctly understood, then, that when Trinitarians say there are three Persons in the Godhead, they do not by any means intend to say, that God is *three* and *one* in the *same sense*. The Unity refers to one respect,

the Trinity to another. How this is to be explained, they do not pretend to know, or even to have an opinion. They consider it as their duty, simply and humbly to receive the fact, as a great mystery, without presuming to comprehend it, or to attempt a developement of the *manner* in which the fact exists; just as they receive the fact of the Divine Omnipresence, or of the blessedness of heaven; although the same Bible which reveals these facts, declares that they are both far beyond the reach of our minds.

But it will, perhaps, be asked, what we *mean* when we say, there are three *Persons* in the Godhead? What kind of distinction is that which is expressed by the word *Person*? We frankly answer, we do not know. We find a certain three-fold mode of existence in the Deity frequently referred to in Scripture, but not explained; it may be because it is not *possible* adequately to explain it to creatures in our situation; perhaps not even to any created being. There is an essential poverty in all human language, when we attempt to speak of the properties of spirits, and more especially when we speak concerning the most Exalted and Incom-

prehensible of all Spirits. The term *Person* has been employed in the Church of Christ, to express the distinction before us, for many centuries. We found it in use; and not knowing a better term for the purpose intended, we have cheerfully adopted, and continue to use it still. We by no means understand it, however, in a gross or carnal sense. We utterly deny that we mean by it three distinct, independent beings; for we believe that there is but one God. But we mean to express by it a certain (to us mysterious) three-fold mode of existence, in the one living and true God, which carries with it the idea of an **INEFFABLY GLORIOUS SOCIETY** in the Godhead, and lays a foundation for the use of the personal pronouns, I, Thou, He, in that everblessed Society. In short, to employ the language of Dr. *Barrow*, we believe, "That
"there is one Divine Nature or Essence, com-
"mon to three Persons, incomprehensibly uni-
"ted, and ineffably distinguished; united in
"essential attributes, distinguished by peculiar
"relations; all equally infinite in every Divine
"perfection; each different from the other in
"order and manner of subsistence; that there
"is a mutual existence of One in All, and All in

"One; a communication without any depriva-
 "tion or diminution in the communicant; an
 "eternal generation, and an eternal procession,
 "without precedence or succession, without pro-
 "per causality or dependence; a Father impar-
 "ting his own, and the Son receiving his Father's
 "life, and a Spirit issuing from both, without
 "any division or multiplication of essence.—
 "These are notions which may well puzzle our
 "reason in conceiving how they agree, but
 "should not stagger our faith in assenting that
 "they are true: upon which we should medi-
 "tate, not with hope to comprehend, but with
 "dispositions to admire; veiling our faces in
 "the presence, and prostrating our reason at the
 "feet, of Wisdom so far transcending us."*

Nor ought it to give rise to the least difficulty
 in the minds of any, that the second Person of
 the Trinity is called the *Son of God*; that He is
 said to be the only *Begotten Son*, and the *eter-
 nally Begotten*. I know that the doctrine of the
eternal generation of the Son of God is regarded
 by many as implying a contradiction in terms.
 But here again is a most presumptuous assump-

* BARROW'S *Defence of the Trinity*. p. 7. 8.

tion of the principle, that God is a being *altogether such an one as ourselves*. Because generation among men necessarily implies *priority*, in the order of time as well as of nature, on the part of the father, and *derivation* and *posteriority* on the part of the son, the objection infers that it must also be so in the Divine nature. But is this a legitimate, is it a rational inference? It certainly is not. That which is true, as it respects the nature of man, may be infinitely removed from the truth, as it respects the eternal God. It has been often well observed, that, with regard to all effects which are *voluntary*, the cause must be prior to the effect; as the father is to the son, in human generation: But that in all that are *necessary*, the effect must be coeval with the cause; as the stream is with the fountain, and light with the sun. Has the sun ever existed a moment without sending out beams? And if the sun had been an eternal being, would there not have been an eternal, necessary emanation of light from it? But God is confessedly eternal. Where, then, is the absurdity or contradiction of an eternal, necessary emanation from Him, or, if you please, an *eternal generation*,—and also an *eternal procession* of the Holy Spirit from the

Father and the Son? To deny the *possibility* of this, or to assert that it is a manifest *contradiction*, either in terms or ideas, is to assert that, although the Father is from all eternity, yet He could not *act* from all eternity; which, I will venture to assert, is as UNPHILOSOPHICAL as it is IMPIOUS. Sonship, even among men, implies no personal *inferiority*. A son may be perfectly equal, and is sometimes greatly superior to his father, in every desirable power, and quality: and, in general, he does in fact partake of the same human nature, in all its fullness and perfection, with his parent. But, still, forsooth, it is objected, that we cannot conceive of *generation* in any other sense than as implying *posteriority* and *derivation*. But is not this saying, in other words, that the objector is determined, in the face of all argument, to persist in measuring Jehovah by earthly and human principles? Shall we never have done with such a perverse begging of the question, as illegitimate in reasoning, as it is impious in its spirit? The scriptures declare that Christ is the *Son*, the *only begotten Son* of the Father; to the Son the Father is represented as saying, *Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever*: and concerning himself the Son declares,

I and my Father are one. This is enough for the christian's faith. He finds no more difficulty in believing this, than in believing that there is an eternal, omniscient and omnipresent Spirit, who made all worlds out of nothing, and upholds them continually by the word of his power.

I am aware that some who maintain, with great zeal, the Divinity and atonement of Christ, reject his *eternal Sonship*, or *generation*, as being neither consistent with reason, nor taught in scripture. It does not accord, either with my plan or my inclination, to spend much time in animadverting on this aberration, for such I must deem it, from the system of gospel truth. I will only say that, to me, the doctrine of the eternal Sonship of the Saviour appears to be plainly taught in the word of God, and to be a doctrine of great importance in the economy of salvation. Of course, I view those who reject it, not merely as in error, but in very serious error; an error which, though actually connected with ardent piety, and general orthodoxy, in many who embrace it, has, nevertheless, a very unhappy tendency, and cannot fail, I fear, to draw in its train many mischievous conse-

quences. If the title *Father*, be the distinctive title of the *first* Person of the adorable Trinity, *as such*, does not the correlative title of *Son* seem to be called for by the *second* Person, *as such*? If the second Person of the Trinity is not to be distinguished by the title of *Son*, what *is* his distinguishing title? By what appropriate name are we to know Him, as distinguished from the other Persons? In the form of Baptism, all the friends of orthodoxy grant that the *Father* and the *Holy Ghost* are expressive of divine personal distinctions; but if so, what good reason can be given why the *Son* should be understood differently? In short, my belief is, that the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son, is so closely connected with the doctrine of the Trinity, and the Divine character of the Saviour, that where the former is generally abandoned, neither of the two latter will be long retained. I must therefore, warn you against the error of rejecting this doctrine, even though it come from *the house of a friend*. It is a mystery, but a precious mystery, which seems to be essentially interwoven with the whole substance, as well as language, of the blessed economy of mercy.

Concerning this eternal generation of the Son, the early christian writers constantly declared that it was firmly to be believed ; but, at the same time, that it was presumptuous to attempt to inquire into the *manner* of it.

Irenæus asserts, that “ THE SON, FROM ETERNITY, CO-EXISTED WITH THE FATHER ; and “ that from the beginning, he always revealed “ the Father to angels, and archangels, and “ principalities and powers, and all to whom it “ pleased him to reveal him.”*

Lactantius, in his fourth book *De vera Sapientia*, says, “ How, therefore, did the Father beget “ the Son ? These divine works can be known of “ none, declared by none. But the holy scriptures teach that He is the Son of God, that “ He is the Word of God.”

Ambrose, in his treatise, *De Fide, ad Gratianum*, speaks in the following decisive and eloquent strain—I inquire of you “ when and how “ the Son was begotten ? It is impossible for me “ to know the mystery of this generation. My

* *Contra Hæreses*, Lib. II. cap. 30.

“mind fails ; my tongue is silent ; and not only
“mine, but the tongues of angels : it is above
“principalities, above angels, above the Cheru-
“bim, above the Seraphim, above all understand-
“ing. Lay thine hand upon thy mouth. It is
“not lawful to search into these heavenly mys-
“teries. It is lawful to know that He *was* born,
“but not lawful to examine *how* he was born.
“The former I dare not deny ; the latter I am
“afraid to inquire into. For if *Paul*, when he
“was taken up into the third heaven, affirms
“that the things which he heard could not be
“uttered, how can we express the mystery of
“the Divine Generation, which we can neither
“understand nor see?”

Let not, then, my Christian Brethren, the charge of “mystery,” or the cant proverb, that “where mystery begins, faith and religion end,” in the least move you. That mystery should be readily allowed to exist every where in God’s *Creation*, and in God’s *Providence*, and at the same time be unceremoniously rejected from God’s *Revelation*, is indeed more than strange ! That creatures who acknowledge that the nature of God is infinitely unlike, and infinitely

above, that of any other being in the Universe ; and that their own share of reason is so small that they can scarcely think or speak intelligibly about it, or so much as define their own faculties of reasoning ; should yet refuse to believe any thing of Jehovah which does not accord with human notions ; is, surely, as weak and irrational as it is presumptuous. But that creatures who confess themselves to be miserable *sinners*, lying at the footstool of mercy, and standing in need of a revelation from God, to teach them, what they could not otherwise know, concerning his perfections, and the way of acceptance with Him ; should yet, when they acknowledge that such a Revelation has been given, undertake to sit in judgment upon it, and to reject such parts of it as are above the grasp of their disordered and enfeebled reason ; argues a degree of daring and infatuated impiety, which, if it were not so common, we should be ready to say could not exist. Wherein does it essentially differ from that temper by which “angels became apostate spirits?”

In truth, when men once begin to indulge in this disposition to reject from revelation that which they cannot comprehend, they not only

cherish a temper hostile to piety; but they venture upon a stream which will land them they know not where. I referred, in a preceding page, to the Omnipresence and Omniscience of God, as attributes which *all* who bear the Christian name are ready to acknowledge. But you will, perhaps, be surprised to learn that this representation was not strictly correct. The fact is, that both these perfections of God, as well as his Eternity, his Immensity and his Spirituality, have been virtually called in question by some Unitarians; on the principle that our reason could not comprehend them. On the same ground, also, they have denied that the creation of all things *out of nothing* is credible. Now my remark on this reasoning is, not that there is any *inconsistency* in it; for, conceding to them their fundamental principle, that nothing incomprehensible is to be believed, all the Divine perfections which have been alluded to, and several others, must be drawn into doubt, or totally rejected.

Accordingly, the progress which this compendious mode of disposing of the mysteries of revelation has made among the Unitarian the-

ologians and criticks of *Germany*, affords a solemn warning. Once they stood substantially on the same ground with the body of the Unitarians in this country; and would have been shocked at the thought of going to the length in scepticism at which they are now found. But, proceeding step by step, many of them have come to reject from the Bible, ALL MYSTERIES, AND ALL MIRACLES. In *their* view, the Mosaic account of the Creation, is a mere poetical fable; the delivery of the Law on Mount *Sinai*, a dexterous management of a thunder storm; the whole Jewish ritual, a mere contrivance of ingenious superstition; and the effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of *Pentecost*, nothing more than a gust of wind, accompanied by an unusual excitement of electric fluid! This is the natural course of the Unitarian doctrine respecting mysteries. Some serious men among them may, and no doubt do, abhor what they would call such impious extremes; but others will probably soon be found following the German example; and the next generation will perhaps find the majority of American Unitarians standing on German ground. Such is the deceitfulness of error; and so great the danger resulting from the adoption of one corrupt principle!

The following quotation from an eminent Divine, and truly eloquent Preacher, is so much to my purpose, and so admirably expresses what I wish to communicate on this branch of the subject, that I make no apology for closing with it what I have to say on the mysteries of revelation.

“This grandeur of God removes the greatest
“stumbling blocks that sceptics and infidels pre-
“tend to meet with in religion. It justifies all
“those dark mysteries which are above the
“comprehension of our feeble reason. We
“would not make use of this reflection to open
“a way for human fancies, or to authorize every
“thing that is presented to us under the idea of
“the marvellous. All doctrines that are incom-
“prehensible, are not divine; nor ought we to
“embrace any opinion merely because it is be-
“yond our knowledge. But when a religion in
“other respects has good guarantees; when we
“have good arguments to prove that such a rev-
“elation comes from heaven; when we certainly
“know that it is God who speaks; ought we to
“be surprised if ideas of God which come so
“fully authenticated, absorb and confound us?
“I freely grant, that, had I consulted my own

“reason only, I could not have discovered some
“mysteries of the Gospel. Nevertheless, when
“I think on the grandeur of God; when I cast
“my eyes on that vast Ocean; when I consider
“that immense All; nothing astonishes me,
“nothing stumbles me, nothing seems to me in-
“admissible, how incomprehensible soever it
“may be. When the subject is Divine, I am
“ready to believe all, to admit all, to receive
“all; provided I be convinced that it is God
“himself who speaks to me, or any one on his
“part. After this, I am no more astonished
“that there are three distinct Persons in one
“Divine Essence: one God, and yet a Fath-
“er, a Son, and a Holy Ghost. After this I am
“no more astonished that God foresees all with-
“out forcing any; permits sin without forcing
“the sinner; ordains free and intelligent crea-
“tures to such and such ends, yet without des-
“troying their intelligence or their liberty.
“After this, I am no more astonished that the
“justice of God required a satisfaction propor-
“tional to his greatness; that his own love hath
“provided that satisfaction; and that God, from
“the abundance of his compassion, designed the
“mystery of an incarnate God: a mystery which

“angels admire, while sceptics oppose : a mys-
“tery which absorbs human reason, but which
“fills all heaven with songs of praise : a mys-
“tery which is the *great mystery*, by excellence,
“but the greatness of which nothing should
“make us reject, since religion proposeth it as
“the grand effort of the wisdom of the incompre-
“hensible God, and commandeth us to receive
“it on the testimony of the incomprehensible
“God himself. Either religion must tell us
“nothing about God, or what it tells us must be
“beyond our capacities ; and in discovering
“even the borders of this immense Ocean, it
“must needs exhibit a vast extent, in which our
“feeble eyes are lost. But what surprises me,
“what stumbles me, what frightens me, is to see
“a diminutive creature, a contemptible man, a
“little ray of light glimmering through a few
“feeble organs, controvert a point with the Su-
“preme Being, oppose that Intelligence who
“sitteth at the helm of the world ; question
“what he affirms, dispute what he determines,
“appeal from his decisions, and, even after
“God hath given evidence, reject all doctrines
“that are beyond his capacity. Enter into thy
“nothingness, mortal creature ! What madness

“animates thee? How durst thou pretend; thou
“who art but a point; thou whose essence is
“but an atom, to measure thyself with the Su-
“preme Being, with Him who fills, heaven and
“earth; with Him whom *heaven, and the heaven*
“*of heavens cannot contain? Canst thou by*
“*searching find out God? Canst thou find out*
“*the Almighty to perfection? High as heaven,*
“*what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what*
“*canst thou know? He stretcheth out the north*
“*over the empty place, and hangeth the earth*
“*upon nothing. He bindeth up the waters in his*
“*thick clouds, the pillars of heaven tremble, and*
“*are astonished at his reproof. Lo these are*
“*parts of his ways, but how little a portion is*
“*heard of Him? But the thunder of his power,*
“*who can understand? Gird up now thy loins*
“*like a man; for I will demand of thee, and*
“*answer thou me. Where wast thou when I*
“*laid the foundations of the earth? Declare if*
“*thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the*
“*measures thereof? Who hath stretched out the*
“*line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations*
“*thereof fastened? Who laid the corner stone*
“*thereof, when the morning stars sang together,*
“*and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Who*

*"shut up the sea with doors, when I made the
 "cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a
 "swaddling band for it? When I break up for
 "it my decreed place, and set bars, and doors,
 "and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no
 "farther; and here shall thy proud waves be
 "stayed? He that reproveth God, let him an-
 "swer this. O Lord, such knowledge is too
 "wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain
 "unto it."**

V. The FIFTH and last Prejudice on this subject to which I wish to call your attention, is that which arises from THE AUTHORITY OF GREAT NAMES. Unitarians are more apt, if I do not mistake, than any other sect who assume the Christian name, to boast of the patronage of distinguished men. This is, possibly owing, in part at least, to that lurking consciousness that their cause stands in need of such a prop, which more frequently, perhaps, than is imagined, attends the advocates of error. And hence there is scarcely any method of defending their anti-christian citadel of which they appear more fond, than to array a list of eminent men, to

* SAURIN'S *Sermons*, by Robinson, Vol. I. p. 78.

whom they lay claim, as the open or the secret friends of Unitarianism. That cause, they tell us, cannot be bad, which some of the greatest and best men that ever lived, have espoused.

The weakness of this plea is so obvious, that a formal refutation of it will not be thought necessary by any impartial reader. The same plea might be urged with quite as much force in support of Transubstantiation, the worship of Images and Relicks, and many other of the most palpable and irrational errors, that ever disgraced the Christian Church. They have all had able and eminent advocates, whose opinions have been confidently quoted in their favour, and whose authority would be decisive, if talents, learning and virtue, could be admitted as substitutes for scriptural warrant. Yet if any one were to argue that, because *John Duns Scotus*, and *Aquinas*, and *Bellarmin*, and *Fenelon* and *Pascal*, and a host of other eminent men, were all Catholics, and devoted their great powers and erudition to the support of many of the superstitions of the Papacy, that therefore these superstitions must be founded in Scripture; every impartial man would perceive such

a conclusion to be at once illegitimate in reasoning, and false in fact. Not a whit better is the argument drawn by Unitarians, in favour of their cause, from the authority of great names. As long as they themselves are compelled to acknowledge that the grossest absurdities, and the most wretched superstitions, have been countenanced by many men equally distinguished, they will hardly venture to lay much stress on an argument so capable of being turned against them.

The truth is, if ALL THE WORLD were against the BIBLE, it would be of no weight in the Christian's estimate. If all the talents and learning that ever apostate man could vaunt, were leagued for the support of Unitarianism, it would only be another proof that *the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*. Thus we argue in the case of those who reject Revelation altogether; and the argument is just as good with respect to their NEAR RELATIVES, the Unitarians. The question which we are called upon to solve, is, not, whether this great man believed in accordance with us; or whether that great man believed differently; but the question is, *what saith the Scriptures?* If THEY be in our

favour, we can well afford to have thousands of great names in the ranks of our opponents.

But it ought to be known, that, whatever may be the value of this argument, it operates with incomparably more force in favour of Orthodoxy, than in favour of Unitarianism. In taking a survey of the Christian world, from the time of the Apostles to this hour, for *one* truly great man who has avowed himself a Unitarian, I will venture to produce *five hundred*, who have taken the opposite side. All the great Reformers, throughout *Europe*, as we shall see hereafter, espoused the cause of Orthodoxy with perfect decision. Nay, the great body of the most profoundly learned and pious men that ever adorned both Catholick and Protestant Christendom, have espoused the same cause, so far as respects the main points in dispute between the Orthodox and Unitarians. If the question, then, is to be carried by a majority of votes—by a majority of the *great* and the *erudite*, the majority is immense in favour of Orthodoxy. But if the weight of *piety*, as well as of *talent*;—of *deep Biblical and theological knowledge*, as well as of *elegant literature and human science*, is to be taken

into the account, the preponderance in favour of Orthodoxy, is beyond all comparison. This Unitarians well know; and, therefore, it must be confessed they had no small temptation to make, as they have done, an ostentatious display of the comparatively few respectable names that could be mustered on their side.

This being so, you will readily perceive what estimate you ought to form of those sanguine, impetuous, and superficial advocates of Unitarianism, who represent the friends of their system as the only really great and learned men; as the only men of large views, and profound knowledge; while the friends of Orthodoxy are spoken of by them as persons of contracted minds, of scanty acquirements, of low, grovelling prejudices, and as the weak slaves of system and authority. Such miserable rodomontade may pass very well with those who know nothing of the history of the human mind, and its greatest ornaments. But by all others it will be regarded as the vainest boasting that can well be imagined, and of which a truly learned Unitarian would be utterly ashamed.

But it will, perhaps, be asked, Have not some men of distinguished talents and learning, who avowed themselves Unitarians, written with great ability on the evidences of Christianity, and in the defence of some of its doctrines? They have. But if Unitarians are not to be acknowledged as Christians, what estimate ought we to form of these men and their labours? Were they powerful writers on behalf of Christianity, and yet no Christians? By what name, then, ought they to be known? There is really no difficulty in this case. A man may write with great zeal and force in support of a PARTICULAR PART of a religious system, who can by no means be considered as a cordial friend of the GENERAL SYSTEM. A *Deist* may write with great ability in defence of the doctrine of a particular Providence, which is evidently a doctrine of the Bible; and a *Jew* may write with no less ability in support of the miracles and inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures, in which the Christian will always own him as an auxiliary. But you would not think of calling either, on this account, a Christian. In like manner, if Dr. *Priestley*, or Dr. *Lardner*, or any other distinguished Unitarian, wrote

well on any subject connected with Christianity, while we venerate them for their learning and virtues, and thankfully avail ourselves of their aid, on any subject on which they have written ably and instructively; we are no more bound to call them Christians, or to consider the general spirit of their writings as coinciding with the Gospel, than we are to consider *Josephus*, *Maimonides*, or *Ben Jarchi*, as entitled to the name of Christian, while we esteem, and employ their works, in aid of the Christian cause.

But, after all, Unitarians are in the constant habit of pressing into the list of their friends and advocates, many whose names ought never to be placed in such company. If any distinguished man be found to have speculated on the doctrine of the Trinity, or that of the Deity of the Redeemer, in an unusual manner; if he be found to doubt whether the common mode of speaking on these doctrines is the best, or whether the *Athanasian* creed is expressed with sufficient caution; he is immediately set down as a Unitarian. If one of this character happen to say a word against *Creeds* and *Confessions*; or to employ mild, indulgent language

toward those who deny the Saviour's Divinity; he is unceremoniously affirmed to be a Unitarian. Nay if, in the honesty of his heart, the most thorough Trinitarian should drop an expression, which can be so construed, by a torturing logick, as to admit of a consequence never thought of by him who uttered it; he is forthwith pronounced a Unitarian. On grounds of this sort, you may rely upon it, my brethren, many a pious friend of Orthodoxy has been represented as standing in the Unitarian ranks. You are by no means, therefore, to conclude, that every one to whom they give this name, really deserves it. The gross calumny with which they have perseveringly followed the excellent Doctor *Watts*, is a specimen of this injustice as striking as it is shameful.

With respect to many others whom Unitarians claim, my only wonder is, that conscientious men can possibly boast of such persons as an honour to any cause. When they bring forward, for example, a long list of clergymen and others, of the church of *England*, who solemnly professed their belief in the 39 Articles, and who constantly made use of a liturgy, the whole char-

acter of which is strikingly Trinitarian; but who are still alledged to have been Unitarians in principle; I am amazed at their inconsiderate zeal. Either these persons were really Unitarians, or they were not. If they were *not*, then they have been basely calumniated. If they *were*, then they have lived in habits of the most shameful dishonesty, and perjury; a dishonesty and perjury which, if known, could not fail of rendering them, in the eyes of all upright men, a disgrace to any society calling itself a church of Christ.

I shall not now agitate the question whether *Newton* and *Locke* were Unitarians, as has been confidently alledged. But if they were, their morality was worthy of their creed. Both of them repeatedly subscribed the Articles of the Church of *England*; and both of them habitually joined in the communion, as well as in the prayers of that church. Did they do this, then, believing those Articles to be ESSENTIALLY ERRONEOUS, even with regard to fundamental doctrines; and that worship to be GROSS IDOLATRY? If so, claim them who will! They would have been a disgrace to an Orthodox Church, and

would certainly have been cast out of it, unless it had been unfaithful, or they had concealed their principles. *Whiston*, it seems, does alledge that *Newton* was almost incurably displeased with him for having said that he (*Newton*) was an *Arian*. This looks as if, either, the charge was false, or he was ASHAMED OF HIS CREED, and wished to maintain the character of an Orthodox man. Either supposition, I should think, would be far from doing credit to the Unitarian cause. As to Mr. *Locke*, if there were truth and candour in the man, he was no *Socinian*; for he solemnly denied it while he lived; he acknowledged the doctrine of Christ's SATISFACTION FOR SIN; and after his death, a distinguished literary friend, who lived with him during several of the last years of his life, and who translated the most valuable of his works into the French language, declares, that, in his last moments, he thanked God "for the love shewn to man in justifying him by faith in Jesus Christ, and in particular for having called him to the knowledge of that DIVINE SAVIOUR."*

* *Locke's Works*—9th Vol. p. 173. 8vo. Edit.

You see, then, my Christian Friends, the amount of this prejudice founded on the authority of GREAT NAMES. It turns out to be a plea of no force whatever : or rather, so far as it has any force, it is in the proportion of FIVE HUNDRED TO ONE IN FAVOUR OF ORTHODOXY, AND AGAINST UNITARIANISM. Will you cast in your lot, then, with that comparatively small body, who have abandoned the religion of the Apostles, and of the primitive Church ; some of whom have been distinguished for their talents and learning, and a few of them eminent for their moral virtues ; but the generality of whom, even Dr. *Priestley* being judge, have never been remarkable for their piety ; or will you unite your destiny with that GREAT BODY of holy men of God, *of whom the world was not worthy* ; men as distinguished for the ardour of their piety, and the activity of their benevolent zeal, as for the vigour of their minds, and the extent of their erudition ? If I must follow human authority, let the latter be my guides !

LETTER IV.

Testimony of the early Fathers on this Subject.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

THE word of God, as the Orthodox believe, is the only certain test of divine truth; the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Of course, that which is not found in Scripture, however extensively and unanimously it may have been received by those who bore the Christian name, must be rejected, as forming no part of that precious system which God has revealed to man for his salvation. But when we think we find a doctrine plainly, frequently, and solemnly taught in the Bible, it certainly does, and in the estimation of all reasonable men, it ought to corroborate the fact, that the doctrine is *really* found there, and is, consequently, of God, when we find the true Church, in all ages, maintaining

and cleaving to it, nay contending for it, with zeal, as a fundamental part of divine truth. I need not tell the pious that there is a consolation as well as a duty, in *walking in the footsteps of the flock*.

Now, if I am not greatly deceived, nothing is more easy than to show, that the doctrines of a Trinity of Persons in the adorable Godhead, and the Divinity of Jesus Christ, have always been held as doctrines of the Gospel by the true church of Christ, and been regarded and contended for as fundamental; that in the purest ages and portions of the church, they have been maintained with most care, and preached with most zeal; and that those who rejected them have been always branded as *heretics*, and, as such, cast out of the church, and even denied the name of Christian. If all this can be made out, as I have no doubt it can, to the satisfaction of every impartial mind, will it not go far towards demonstrating, that the views of the Orthodox on this subject are correct, and that the doctrines which they cherish, are indeed the truth of God?

In attempting to give a sketch of that portion of the testimony in favour of our doctrines which may be called *historical*, I might begin with the Primitive Church, and examine the evidence found on this subject in the Sacred records. But this would be to enter into so large a field, that I must at present decline it, as leading me beyond the limits which I have prescribed for these Letters. This is a branch of the testimony which, if entered upon at all, must be pursued into considerable detail. But this has been done by so many hands, and with so much ability, that I refer you to their labours; and shall feel myself warranted in taking for granted that the doctrines for which I contend are plainly and undoubtedly taught in Scripture. When I find the Scriptures declaring, in the most express and unequivocal manner, that *God was manifest in the flesh*; that Jesus Christ is *the Lord from heaven*; that *He is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, which was, and which is, and which is to come, the Almighty*; that the Jews *crucified the Lord of glory*; that *in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*; that *all things were made by him, and for him, and that*

without him was not any thing made that was made ; that as He made all things, so He upholds all things by the word of his power, and is over all God blessed forever.—When I find Him called the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express Image of his Person—Jehovah our righteousness—Immanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us—the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.—When I find Him asserting concerning himself, that which plainly implies Divinity—such as that wherever his people are assembled, in all parts of the world, there He is in the midst of them—that He has power to forgive sins—and that He searcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins of the children of men : When I hear him say—I and my Father are one—Before Abraham was, I am :—When I find it solemnly enjoined that we honour the Son even as we honour the Father ; accompanied with the declaration, that he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father : —When I find it said, with peculiar emphasis, that He has all power in heaven and on earth—that his throne is forever and ever—that He had glory with the Father before the world was—that we must all stand before the judgment seat of

Christ—that *He bore our sins in his own body on the tree*—that *his blood cleanseth from all sin*—that *He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world*—that *He has made peace by the blood of his cross*,—and that *He saves his people from their sins*. :—When I read the form of Baptism, which the Saviour himself prescribed, and find the Son and the Holy Ghost put on a par with the Father, both as to personality, and Divine character :—When I read the apostolical Benediction, and find *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, placed *before the love of God the Father*, as if on purpose to show that the former was not inferior, either in nature or dignity to the latter :—When I find good men represented in the sacred history as praying to Christ, and commending their departing spirits to him :—When I find divine perfections, divine works, and divine worship every where ascribed to Him :—When I read these passages, and many others of a similar character, I am compelled to believe that the true and proper Divinity of the Son, as equal with the Father, is taught in Scripture. To suppose language and representations of this kind to be applied to a mere man, or to any

creature, however exalted, is, in my view, of all incredible things, one of the most incredible. In short, to suppose that men who *spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*—men who constantly had it as one of their grand objects, to guard their fellow men against idolatry, should speak thus concerning any mere created being, would be to suppose them speaking with an utter disregard of all that is correct in language, of all that is sober in thought, and of all that is reverential to the majesty of heaven. The Bible, if this be supposed, instead of speaking *the words of truth and soberness*, must exhibit (with the deepest reverence I would write it) the most wonderful compound of empty bombast, and of cabbalistical jargon, that ever was uttered. It cannot be. The eternal Son, therefore, is Jehovah, of the same substance or essence, with the Father, equal in power and glory.

It is no valid objection to this conclusion, that Christ is spoken of, in other parts of Scripture, as a *man*, and that He is represented as speaking the language, and acting the part of a man. This is precisely what we say, that He is God and man, having two natures united in one

Person forever. This we hold to have been absolutely necessary in order to his being qualified to be a Mediator between God and man, and, as such, to lay his hands upon both. Had He not been man, He could not have been made subject, as our Surety, to the law which we had broken; nor have obeyed and suffered as our representative; and had He not been God, his obedience and sufferings could not have had that infinite value which was indispensable to their efficacy for justifying and saving the unnumbered millions of his people. And I will add, had not his Person been constituted in this wonderful manner, why should the inspired writers appear to labour as they do, for adequate expressions to set forth the transcendent mystery and glory of his appearance in the flesh?

This, I said, is not only the doctrine of the Bible, but it has also been the doctrine of the true Church of Christ, from the Apostles to the present day. To an attempt to establish this position, I would now, my Christian Brethren, request your candid attention.

The early Christian writers are usually called, by way of distinction, the *Fathers*. They were men, of course, of different degrees of talent and attainment; placed in different situations; of different ways of thinking and feeling, on a great variety of subjects; and, consequently, in very different degrees entitled to the confidence of those who come after them. But I think it may be said, without fear of contradiction, that they ALL concur in bearing testimony to the truth of the position which I am now engaged in supporting. The following extracts from a few of them (for to give the whole, would be to write several volumes, instead of a small manual,) will be sufficient for my purpose.*

Barnabas, sometimes called the Apostle, who was probably born before the crucifixion of the Saviour, and who wrote soon after the destruction of *Jerusalem*, by *Titus*, is a very decisive

* With respect to a large part of the following extracts from the early Fathers, the Author has drawn them himself from the original writers, and will be responsible for the accuracy of the citations. With regard to the rest, not having the originals within convenient reach, he has taken them from Bishop Bull, Mr. Burgh, Dr. Jamieson, Mr. Simpson, and others, of established reputation. It has been his study, in every instance, in making, or adopting a translation, to give the strict, unvarnished sense of the writer.

witness in favour of the Divinity of Christ. In the 5th section of his *Catholick Epistle*, he says, "The Lord was content to suffer for our souls, although He be THE LORD OF THE WHOLE EARTH; to whom God said, before the beginning of the world, Let us make man after our own image and likeness." Again, in the 7th section, he says, "If therefore the Son of God, who is LORD OF ALL, and shall come to JUDGE BOTH THE QUICK AND THE DEAD, hath suffered, that by his stripes we might live, let us believe that the Son of God could not have suffered but for us." Surely He who is LORD OF THE WHOLE EARTH—LORD OF ALL—and who will JUDGE THE QUICK AND DEAD, can be no other than a Divine Person.

Clemens Romanus was probably born before the middle, and wrote towards the close, of the first century. As is generally supposed, he was personally acquainted with most of the Apostles, and seems to have been the same person whom saint *Paul* speaks of as his *fellow labourer*. All the writings of this Father which have reached us, are comprised in a few pages. In these, though he no where treats formally or

professedly on the subject in hand, he incidentally expresses himself in the following manner—"For Christ is theirs who are humble, and "who do not exalt themselves over his flock. "The sceptre of the MAJESTY OF GOD, our "LORD JESUS CHRIST, came not in the shew of "pride and arrogance; though He could have "done so; but with humility, as the Holy "Ghost had before spoken concerning him. "And again—"God is good to all, especially "to those who flee to his mercy through our "Lord Jesus Christ, TO WHOM BE GLORY AND "MAJESTY FOREVER AND EVER. Amen!"

Polycarp, who flourished in the beginning of the second century, and who suffered martyrdom under the emperor *Marcus Antoninus*, about A. D. 167, in a short *Epistle to the Phillippians*, the only writing of his which is now extant, writes thus. "Mercy and peace unto you, "from God Almighty, and the Lord Jesus "Christ, our Saviour, be multiplied.—Every "living creature shall WORSHIP CHRIST—Now "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, "and he himself, who is our everlasting High "Priest, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, build

“you up in faith and truth, and in all meekness
“and gentleness, and grant unto you a lot and
“portion among his saints!—God is good to
“all, especially to those who flee to his mercy,
“through our Lord Jesus Christ; to whom be
“glory and majesty forever and ever. Amen!”

After the death of *Polycarp*, the church of *Smyrna*, of which he had been pastor, wrote a circular letter to other churches, in which they gave an account of his sufferings. From this letter we learn, that, when he was at the stake, he addressed a prayer to God, which he concluded with this doxology—“For all things I praise thee, I bless thee, I glorify thee, together with the eternal and heavenly Jesus Christ, with whom unto thee, and the Holy Spirit, be glory both now and forever, world without end. Amen!”—The same epistle informs us that, after his death, the Jews suggested to the heathen judge, that he should not suffer the Christians to take his body and bury it, lest they should leave the worship of their crucified Master, and begin to worship *Polycarp*. “Not considering,” says the epistle—“that we can never either forsake the worship of Christ,

“who suffered for the salvation of those who
 “are saved in the whole world, the just for the
 “unjust, or worship any other. For we wor-
 “SHIP HIM as being the SON OF GOD; but the
 “martyrs we only *love*, as they deserve, for their
 “great affection for their King and Master, and
 “as being disciples and followers of their Lord,
 “whose partners and fellow disciples we desire
 “to be.”

The next witness whom I shall adduce is *Ignatius*, who suffered martyrdom under the Emperor *Trajan*, A. D. 107. In his Epistles the following passages occur.*

The salutation of his Epistle to the *Ephesians*, is in these words—“*Ignatius*, who is also called “*Theophorus*, to the church which is at *Ephesus*, in *Asia*, most deservedly happy; being “blessed, through the greatness and fullness of

* The author is aware, that the authenticity of the Epistles of *Ignatius*, has been called in question, as well as that of *Barnabas*, before quoted. It is impossible in a work written on the plan, and with the design, of these Letters, to enter into the merits of controversies of this sort. It is sufficient for his purpose to say, that the great body of learned men consider the Epistle of *Barnabas*, and the smaller Epistles of *Ignatius*, (and from these alone he offers quotations) as, in the main, the real works of the writers whose names they bear. Of this opinion was the eminently learned Unitarian, Dr. *Lardner*.

“God the Father, and predestinated before the world began, that it should be always unto an enduring and unchangeable glory; being united and chosen through his true passion, according to the will of the Father, and Jesus Christ our God; all happiness, by Jesus Christ, and his undefiled grace.” In the 7th section of the same Epistle, he says, “There is one Physician, both fleshly and spiritual; made and not made; GOD INCARNATE.” And again, in the 19th section—“Ignorance was taken away, and the old kingdom abolished, GOD HIMSELF APPEARING IN THE FORM OF A MAN.”

Toward the close of his Epistle to the *Magnesians*, he expresses himself thus—“Study, therefore, to be confirmed in the doctrine of our Lord, and of his Apostles; that whatsoever ye do, ye may prosper, both in body and spirit; in faith and charity; IN THE SON, and in THE FATHER, and in the HOLY SPIRIT.”

He begins his Epistle to the *Smyrneans* thus—“I glorify God, even Jesus Christ, who has given you such wisdom.” And in the close of

his Epistle to *Polycarp*, he says, "I wish you
"all happiness in Jesus Christ, OUR GOD."

All the witnesses whom I have yet cited lived in the first century, and were personally acquainted with some of the Apostles. Their testimony, therefore, is weighty, and worthy of peculiar attention.

Irenæus, who was a disciple of *Polycarp*, and who is said to have suffered martyrdom about A. D. 202, is an important and decisive witness on the subject before us. In the fourth book of his work against the *Heretics*, he begins by asserting That "GOD WAS MADE MAN."—In the second book of that work, and toward the close of the thirteenth chapter, as quoted in the last Letter, he says "THE SON FROM ETERNITY CO-
"EXISTED WITH THE FATHER, and from the
"beginning he always revealed the Father to
"angels, and archangels, and principalities and
"powers, and to all to whom it pleased him to
"reveal Him." In the fourth book and tenth chapter of the same work, he asserts that Jesus Christ was the God who interrogated *Adam*; who conferred with *Noah*, and gave him the

dimensions of the ark ; who spoke to *Abraham* ; who brought destroying judgments on the inhabitants of *Sodom* ; who directed *Jacob* in his journey, and addressed *Moses* out of the burning bush at *Horeb*. And, to give, but one example more ; in the third book, and sixteenth chapter of the same work, he says—"He (Christ) "is called *Immanuel*, lest we should think him "ONLY A MAN." And to illustrate and confirm this, it is worthy of notice, he immediately subjoins, with some other pointed passages of scripture, that remarkable text in *Romans IX. 5.* "*Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all God blessed forever ;*" which he evidently interprets and applies, just as it is interpreted and applied by modern believers in the Divinity of the Saviour.

About the same time with *Irenæus* lived *Theophilus*, Bishop of the church of *Antioch*. He expressly acknowledges "Christ to be God, "and says the WORLD WAS MADE BY HIM : "for when the Father said, 'Let us make "man in our image, after our likeness,' He "spake to no other but to his own Word, and "his own Wisdom, that is to the SON, and the

“HOLY SPIRIT.”—These he expressly styles
 a “TRINITY IN THE GODHEAD.*

Justin Martyr, who, about A. D. 165, sealed his faith with his blood, as the latter part of his name signifies, affords important and decisive testimony on this subject. In his *Dialogue* with *Trypho* the Jew, the latter is represented as finding fault with Christians for maintaining the Deity and worship of Christ. “To me it “appears,” says *Trypho*, a “paradox, incapable “of any sound proof, to say that this CHRIST “WAS GOD before all time, and that then he “WAS MADE MAN and suffered : and to assert “that he was any thing more than a man, of “men, appears not only paradoxical but foolish.” “I know,” replies *Justin*, “that it “appears paradoxical, and particularly to those “of your nation, who are determined neither “to know nor do the will of God, but to follow “the inventions of your teachers, as God declares of you. However, if I could not demonstrate that He EXISTED BEFORE ALL TIME, “BEING GOD, the Son of the MAKER OF THE “UNIVERSE, and was made man of the Virgin ;

* THEOPH. *ad Autolyc.* lib. II. p. 106, 114, 130.

"yet as this personage was shewn by every
 "sort of proof to be the Christ of God, be the
 "question as it may respecting his Divinity and
 "humanity, you have no right to deny that He
 "is the Christ of God, even if he were only a
 "mere man; you could only say that I was
 "mistaken in my idea of his character. For
 "there are SOME who call themselves Chris-
 "tians, who confess him to be the Christ, but
 "only a mere man; with WHOM NEITHER I, NOR
 "THE MOST WHO BEAR THAT NAME, AGREE;
 "because we are commanded by Christ himself,
 "not to obey the precepts of men, but his own
 "injunctions, and those of the holy prophets."*
 In another part of the same Dialogue, he speaks
 of Christ as "the GOD OF ISRAEL who was
 "with *Moses*."

In his first *Apology*, he expresses himself
 thus—"We WORSHIP AND ADORE THE FATHER,

* The true rendering of this passage in *Justin Martyr* has
 been not a little controverted by Unitarians. I have given that
 which appears to me to be the true sense of it. But to stop to
 adjust disputes of this kind, in detail, would lead me far be-
 yond the limits of these Letters, and defeat their great ob-
 ject. My readers may rest assured, that I will not knowingly
 mislead them with respect to a single quotation; and that I
 will, in no case, introduce, either witnesses or arguments,
 which appear to me to have been either set aside, or weaken-
 ed, by Unitarian criticism.

“AND THAT SON, who came from him, and THE
“SPIRIT OF PROPHECY, honouring them in word
“and in truth. Those who say that the Son is
“the Father, are convicted of being ignorant of
“the Father, and of not knowing that the Fath-
“er of all hath a Son, who being the first begot-
“ten WORD OF GOD, IS ALSO GOD.”

In his second *Apology*, he speaks thus—“We
“WORSHIP and love the WORD OF THE UNBE-
“GOTTEN and INEFFABLE GOD, who is with
“God, because for our sakes he became man,
“that being also a partaker of our sufferings, He
“might accomplish our cure.”—Now, when it
is recollected that these *Apologies* were intended
to give general information concerning the faith
and practice of the Christians in his day, we
cannot suppose that he would be so insane as to
lay before the Pagan rulers, in the face of the
world, any doctrines but those which were known
to be embraced by the great body of his fellow
believers.

Of the writings of *Melito*, pastor of the church
of *Sardis*, who flourished about A. D. 170, only
a few fragments remain, as preserved by *Euse-*

bios, Anastasius, and others. In one of these fragments, he speaks thus, "We are not worshippers of stones; but we are worshippers of the one God, who is before all, and in all, and in his Christ, who is TRULY GOD, the ETERNAL WORD."*—In another he expresses himself in this pointed manner. After saying that it was unnecessary to give further proofs of Christ's *humanity*, he adds, "the miracles which He wrought after his baptism, most forcibly demonstrate and confirm his DIVINITY CONCEALED IN FLESH. Thus being at once PERFECT GOD and PERFECT MAN, he discovered his two natures to us—his DIVINITY, by the miracles which he performed in the three years after his baptism—his humanity, by the thirty antecedent years, in which the meanness of the flesh hid the tokens of his Divinity, though he WAS TRUE AND EVERLASTING GOD."†

The following testimony of *Athenagoras*, who flourished about A. D. 175, is very express and pointed. "The Son of God is the Word of the Father, in power and energy; by him, and

* *Chron. Alexander.* ap SPANHEM: *Hist. Christ.* : p. 610.

† ANASTASIUS, of *Sinai*, as quoted by CAVE, in his *Historia Literaria*, p. 43.

“through him were all things created. The
 “Father and the Son are one. If you desire a
 “further explanation of the meaning of *Son* in
 “this point, I will endeavour to give you a brief
 “one. He is the FIRST-BORN OF THE FATH-
 “ER, but NOT AS EVER BEGINNING TO EXIST—
 “Who is not filled with admiration,” says he,
 “that we who declare God the Father, and God
 “THE SON, and the Holy Spirit, shewing both
 “the power of their Unity, and the distinction
 “of their order, should be called perverse Athe-
 “ists?”—“We are not Atheists, who reckon as
 “God, the Maker of the Universe, and his
 “Word who proceedeth from him.”*

Tatian, a disciple of *Justin Martyr*, in reply to
 the accusations of the heathen, says, “we do not
 “O Grecians, act the part of fools, nor do we tell
 “you idle stories, when we declare that God
 “WAS BORN IN THE HUMAN FORM.†

Contemporary with *Athenagoras*, was *Clemens
 Alexandrinus*, whose testimony is no less expli-
 cit on the subject under consideration. In his

* *ATHENAGOR. Legatio. p. 11, 34.*

† *TATIAN, contra Græcos, p. 159.*

Pædagogus, book first, chapter second, he says, "O children, our Master is like to God his Father, whose Son He is, without sin. HE IS GOD IN THE FORM OF MAN, immaculate." Again, in the third book, and twelfth chapter, of the same work, he thus exhorts—"Let us give thanks to the only Father and Son; to the Son and the Father; to the Son our Teacher and Master, with the Holy Spirit; one in all respects; in whom are all things; by whom all things are one; by whom is eternal existence; whose members we are; whose is the glory, and the ages; who is the perfect good, the perfect beauty, all-wise and all-just, to whom be glory both now and ever. Amen!" And a little after, in the same work, he pours out the following exhortation—"Gather together thy simple children, to praise in a holy manner, to celebrate without guile, Christ the Leader of children, the eternal Logos, the infinite Age, the eternal Light, the Fountain of mercy, &c.—Filled with the dew of the Spirit, let us sing together sincere praises, genuine hymns, to Christ our king, &c.!" The same writer in his *Exhortation to the Gentiles*, styles Christ, THE LIVING GOD, who was then wor-

“shipped and adored. Believe,” says he, “O man in Him who is both MAN AND GOD: believe, O man, in Him who suffered death, and yet is adored as the LIVING GOD.”*

About the same time, that is, toward the close of the second century, flourished *Andronicus*, the martyr, in the account of whose martyrdom, it is represented as having been objected to him by the heathen judge, that Christ, whom he professed to invoke and to worship, was a man, who had suffered under the government of *Pontius Pilate*, and that the records of his sufferings were then extant. It seems that the worship of Christ was so openly avowed by the christians, and so universally known to the heathen, that at every turn it was objected to them; and their answer was always the same; “That they worshipped Him, indeed; not however, as a mere man, but AS A GOD, the Son of God by nature, and of the SAME SUBSTANCE WITH THE FATHER.”†

The testimony of the eloquent *Tertullian*, who flourished about A. D. 200, on this subject, is

* CLEM. ALEX. *Protreptic*, p. 84.

† BARONII, *Annales. Acta Andronici*—an. 190.

as direct and indubitable as can well be imagined. Those who read his treatise against *Praxeas*, will no longer have any remaining doubt. *Praxeas* was a heretick, who taught that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, were one and the same ; in other words, he denied all distinction of Persons in the Godhead, maintaining the same error which was afterwards revived, and has been since generally known, under the name of *Sabellianism*. *Tertullian* entered the lists against him, and wrote a treatise, in which with great decision and force, he supported what were then, and have ever since been considered, as the Orthodox opinions on this subject. In this treatise he speaks pointedly and clearly of the Trinity in Unity ; of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, yet one God ; He speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ as both God and man, as son of man and Son of God, and called Jesus Christ. He speaks also of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And he explicitly declares, not only that he and those around him received this faith ; but that it had obtained from the beginning, antecedently to any former heretics ; and much more antecedently to

Praxeas, who was of yesterday. The following is a small specimen of his language. "The Father is God, the SON is GOD, and the HOLY GHOST is GOD, and every one of them is God." "The name of the Father is God Almighty, the Most High, Lord of Hosts, &c. These names BELONG TO THE SON LIKEWISE."*

The same Father, in his work *De Præscriptione*, gives a creed, which he calls *Regula Fidei*, in which is found the following article. "We believe that Christ was the Word, by whom God made the worlds, and who, at various times, appeared to the patriarchs and prophets." And to this "rule of faith" the following explicit declaration is affixed—"This is the Rule of Faith which was appointed by Christ, and which admits of no dispute among us, but such as hereticks raise, and such as make men hereticks."

Minucius Felix, who lived about A. D. 220, taking notice of the calumny circulated against the Christians, that they worshipped a mere man, as God, thus repels the charge—"You are

* *TERTULLIANI Opera. Rigalt. p. 500—519.*

“greatly mistaken in ascribing to our religion
 “the worship of a guilty man, who was cruci-
 “ed; and in thinking, either, that a guilty man
 “*should*, or that a mere man *could*, be acknow-
 “ledged by us as God. He is miserable indeed
 “whose hope is wholly in a mortal man; for his
 “help perishes with the destruction of the mor-
 “tal nature.”*

Origen, who flourished about A. D. 230, and who undoubtedly was the most learned and able divine of his day, thus expresses himself on the subject now under consideration—“When you
 “confess one God, and assert in the same con-
 “fession that the Father, the Son, and the Holy
 “Ghost are One God, how perplexed, how diffi-
 “cult, how inextricable does this seem *to the un-*
 “*believing!* And again, when you say that the
 “Lord of Glory was crucified, and that it was
 “the Son of man who descended from heaven,
 “How perplexed,” cries he who hears, but
 “hears not with faith; how difficult do these
 “things appear! BECAUSE THEY ARE THEM-
 “SELVES IN AN ERROR. But do thou hold fast,
 “nor entertain a doubt concerning this faith,

* MINUCHI OCTAV. *Apolog*: 31.

“knowing that God hath shewed this way of
 “faith unto thee.”* And again; “There are
 “some, indeed, who make a declaration concern-
 “ing the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,
 “but not in sincerity nor in truth. Such are
 “all HERETICKS, who indeed profess the Father
 “and Son and Spirit, but not in a right and be-
 “lieving manner: for they either separate the
 “Son from the Father, that they may ascribe
 “one nature to the Father, and another to the
 “Son; or they erroneously confound them, by
 “thinking to make of three a compound God; or
 “by supposing ONLY THREE DIFFERENT NAMES.
 “But he who rightly confesses the truth, will
 “indeed ascribe to the Father, Son and Holy
 “Ghost, their distinct properties, but confess
 “that there is NO DIFFERENCE as to NATURE or
 “SUBSTANCE.”†

Speaking of the ordinance of Baptism, *Ori-
 gen* says, “When we come to the grace of Bap-
 “tism, renouncing all other Gods and Lords,
 “we acknowledge one God only, the Father, the
 “Son and the Holy Ghost.” And again;

* *Homil. VI. in Exod.* † *In Epist. ad Romanos. cap. X.*

“I believe that faith of the Father, the Son,
 “and the Holy Spirit, which is believed BY ALL
 “WHO ARE UNITED TO THE CHURCH OF GOD.”*

Cyprian, who was contemporary with *Origen*, and who, though inferior to him, in learning, greatly excelled him in pastoral zeal and fidelity, and in general Orthodoxy, expresses himself on the subject under consideration in a way which cannot be mistaken.

In his work on the *Unity of the Church*, he speaks thus—“The Lord saith, I and my Father
 “are one ; and again, concerning the Father, the
 “Son and the Holy Ghost, it is written, *These*
 “*Three are One.*’ Whoever does not hold THIS
 “UNITY, does not hold the law of God ; does not
 “hold the faith of the Father and of the Son ;
 “and DOES NOT HOLD THE TRUTH UNTO SALVA-

* *Homil. VIII. in Exod. XX.* It is freely granted, that *Origen*, on some occasions, expressed himself concerning the Saviour’s Person, in a manner which an accurate theologian would pronounce exceptionable, and unsafe. But when he was called to speak directly and carefully on the subject ; and especially when he undertook to say what THE CHURCH believed, he employed the language above cited. Unless we make him a common liar, and a liar, too, without any known temptation to depart from the truth, we must suppose that the CHURCH AT LARGE, received and held fast the creed which he declares they did.

“TION.”*—Again, he says, CHRIST WAS GOD AND MAN, that he might be the fitter to be the “Mediator between them.” And again, “This CHRIST IS OUR God; and being a mediator “between two, he PUT ON THE MAN, that he “might lead him to God his Father. Christ “became man, that man might become like “Christ.”†

In a Council at *Carthage*, called to deliberate on the re-baptizing of heretics, and in which *Cyprian* presided, one of the sentences pronounced was the following. “Our Lord said, ‘Go “and baptize all nations, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. “When therefore, we plainly see that heretics “have neither the Father, nor the Son, nor the “Holy Spirit, they ought, on coming into our “mother Church, to be re-born and baptized.” Another sentence pronounced in the same Council was equally decisive—“The Lord Jesus “Christ, OUR GOD, and the Son of God the Father, hath built his Church on a rock, not on “heresy. Wherefore those who are out of the

* *De Unitat. Eccles.* : § 5.

† *Aduer. Judeos.* Lib. II. sect. 10. et de *Vanit. Idol.* Sect. 6.

“Church, and stand in opposition to Christ, “scatter his flock, and cannot be considered as “baptized.” In conformity with the spirit of these declarations was the unanimous decision of the Council.

The same devoted martyr, in another place, expresses himself in this pointed manner. “If “any one could be baptized among the heretics, “he might also obtain remission of sins: and if “he obtained remission of sins, be sanctified, “and made the temple of God. I ask, of what “God? If of the Creator; he could not, who “did not believe in him: if of Christ, neither “could he be his temple, who DENIES CHRIST TO “BE GOD: if of the Holy Spirit; since THESE “THREE ARE ONE, how could the Holy Spirit “be reconciled to him, who is an enemy to the “Father and the Son ?”*

It is very remarkable, too, that *Cyprian*, like *Irenæus*, and others before him, having occasion to quote that strong passage in favour of the divinity of Christ, which is found *Romans IX. 5.* instead of doubting its appropriateness, or adopt-

* *Epist.* p. 73.

ing any thing like the modern Unitarian per-versions, falls in exactly with the interpretation of our English translators, and makes it to read, "*Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all God blessed forever.*"*

Dionysius of Alexandria, was one of the zealous champions for the truth, who opposed the heresy of *Paul of Samosata*, which will be mentioned in the next Letter. He is strongly commended by *Basil*,† for always using the following form of doxology—"To God the Father, and the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, be glory and dominion, now and forever, world without end, Amen!"—The same *Dionysius*, in writing against *Paul of Samosata*, speaks in such pointed and unequivocal terms as these—"Christ is uncreated—He is the Creator of all things—He is GOD BY NATURE—He is consubstantial with the Father—He is immutable, AS BEING GOD—He is GOD OVER ALL, our refuge—He is the Lord and GOD OF ISRAEL, &c."

Novatian, who was contemporary with *Cyprian*, is one of the most powerful witnesses

* *Contra Judeos*, L. II. § 6. † *BASIL. de Spirit. Sancto*, cap. 29.

that could be wished for on the subject before us. He left a treatise expressly "*On the Trinity*," in which that doctrine is asserted, illustrated, confirmed by numerous quotations from scripture, and zealously maintained, with a clearness worthy of the most thorough Trinitarian, of the Athanasian school. The structure of the treatise is such, that it would be difficult to make satisfactory extracts, without extracting a number of pages. *Novatian* contends for three Persons in the Godhead, cautioning his readers against Sabellianism, on the one hand, and Tritheism on the other. He maintains the eternal generation of the Son; and that Christ is very God and very man, in the same mysterious and glorious Person. And, finally, he maintains the divine personality of the Holy Spirit. And, what is worthy of notice, he arrays, in support of these various doctrines, very much the same series of texts of scripture, to which the modern advocates of the same doctrines are accustomed to resort. It is evident that those scriptures which are now deemed decisive on these points, were, in general, viewed in the same light by the Orthodox sixteen hundred years ago.

About the time of *Novatian*, lived *Arnobius*, a distinguished father of the church of *Africa*. This writer brings in the heathen as objecting to the worship of Christ. "Our Gods," say they, "are not displeased with you for worshipping the Almighty God; but that you MAKE A GOD of one that was born a man, and put to death by the punishment of the cross, (an infamous punishment, only inflicted on vile men,) and because you believe him to be still alive, and make daily supplications to him." To this he answers, first, upon their own principles, that, admitting it were so, that Christ was only a mere man; yet he might with more reason deserve to be worshipped for his good deeds to mankind, than either their *Bacchus*, or *Ceres*, or *Æsculapius*, or *Minerva*, or *Triptolemus*, or *Hercules*, &c. But, secondly, he answers more closely, upon true christian principles, that the reason of their worshipping Christ, was the certain knowledge that He was the TRUE GOD, whom they could not but worship and honour. He proceeds—"What then? suppose any one, raving, should ask, Is Christ God? We will reply, HE IS GOD, and God of the inmost powers of the soul."*

* *ARNOB. Contra Gentes*—Lib: I. 30, 36.

The same objection is proposed by *Lactantius*, a learned and eloquent father, who was a disciple of *Arnobius*. "They (the heathen) are wont," says he, "to object to us the sufferings of Christ by way of reproach, that we worship a man, and one that was put to a notorious death by men." In replying to which objection, after having largely set forth the reasons of the Redeemer's incarnation and sufferings, he particularly answers that part of the objection which respects their worshipping him, and pleads that they worshipped him as ONE GOD WITH THE FATHER. "For," says he, "when we speak of GOD THE FATHER, and GOD THE SON, we do not speak of different natures, or separate the one from the other; for neither can He be a Father without a Son, or the Son be divided from the Father: forasmuch as He cannot be called a Father without a Son, nor the Son be begotten without a Father. Seeing, therefore, a Father makes a Son, and a Son makes a Father, they have BOTH ONE MIND, and ONE SPIRIT, and ONE SUBSTANCE."*

* LACTANT. *Div. Instit.* Lib. IV. cap. 29.

The celebrated *Confession of Faith* of *Gregory Thaumaturgus*, who flourished about A. D. 235, precludes all doubt with respect to his opinions. It is as follows. "There is one "God, the Father of the living Word, of the "subsisting Wisdom and Power, and of Him "who is his eternal Image; the perfect Beget- "ter of Him that is perfect, the Father of the "only begotten Son. There is one Lord, the "Only, of the Only, God of God, the Character "and Image of the Godhead; the powerful "Word, the comprehensive Wisdom, by which "all things were made, and the Power that gave "being to the whole creation: the true Son of "the true Father, the Invisible of the Invisible, "the Incorruptible of the Incorruptible, the Im- "mortal of the Immortal, and the Eternal of Him "that is eternal. There is one Holy Ghost, "having its subsistence of God, which appeared "through the Son to mankind, the perfect Image "of the perfect Son; the life giving Life; the "holy Fountain; the Sanctity, and the Author "of sanctification: by whom God the Father "is made manifest; who is over all, and in all; "and GOD THE SON, who is through all. A "PERFECT TRINITY, which neither in glory,

“eternity, or wisdom is divided, or separated
“from itself.”*

I shall only add to this list a short quotation from *Athanasius*, one of the most celebrated Fathers of the fourth century, and a great champion for the Divinity of Christ, and a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. I do not make the extract so much for the purpose of enabling you to decide what the opinions of *Athanasius* himself were on these important subjects; for, that he was zealous in support of the Orthodox opinions, Unitarians themselves have granted without hesitation. But my principal object is to adduce his testimony with respect to what was the uniform doctrine of the church before his time—“We see that this was the tradition, and
“the doctrine, and the faith of the church universal, from the beginning; which our Lord
“himself delivered, which the Apostles preached, and which the Fathers preserved. For in
“this is the church FOUNDED, and he who falls
“from it, can NEITHER BE A CHRISTIAN, nor
“DESERVE THE NAME OF A CHRISTIAN. That

* See CAVE's *Lives of the Fathers*—Art: *Gregory Thaumaturgus*.

"this is the very faith of the church, they (the
 "opposers of the Trinity) may learn from the
 "commission which our Lord gave to his Apos-
 "tles, when sending them forth. He commanded
 "them to lay this foundation in the church;
 "saying, *Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing*
 "*them in the name of the Father, and of the*
 "*Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* But the Apos-
 "tles going forth taught in this very manner;
 "and this is the doctrine which is preached
 "THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE CHURCH UNDER
 "HEAVEN."* Again; "The Apostles, going
 "forth, straightway with the most perfect har-
 "mony preached, that Christ was the Son of
 "God; that he was born in *Bethlehem*, of the
 "seed of *David*, according to the flesh; that he
 "was made like unto men, and crucified for men
 "under *Pontius Pilate*. They declared, that
 "the SAME PERSON WAS GOD AND MAN; the
 "Son of God, and the Son of man; from heaven
 "and from earth; impassible and passible; and
 "that He was no other; not two persons; not two
 "hypostases; not two objects of adoration."†

In accordance with all this, it is remarkable
 that the *Martyrs*, who suffered in the second,

* *Ad Serapionem.* † *Unum esse Christum*—Opera. Tom. I. p. 666.

third and fourth centuries, were generally wont, in their last moments, to PRAY TO CHRIST, and to resign their spirits into his hands, as their Creator and Redeemer. Of this I might fill a number of pages with examples, from the writings of *Eusebius*, and *Ambrose*, and from various collections of what are called, the "*Acts of the Martyrs*." In those solemn and interesting seasons, we find them pouring out their devotions in such language as the following. "O Lord, GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, Jesus Christ, I bow my neck to thee as a sacrifice, who livest to all eternity: to whom belongs honour and power forever and ever. Amen."—And again,—"I give thanks to the God of all kingdoms. Lord Jesus Christ, we serve thee. Thou art our hope. Thou art the hope of Christians. Most holy God, God Almighty, we give thanks unto thee for thy great name." Again; "I beseech thee, O Christ; I give thanks unto thee; deliver me, O Christ. In thy name I suffer; I suffer for a moment; I suffer willingly: let me not be confounded, O Christ!" Once more;—"O Lord Jesus Christ, my Saviour and MY GOD, command that my spirit may be received, for I desire

“to obtain the crown which thy holy angel
“hath shewed me;”*

So much for the direct testimony of the early Fathers. In the substance of this testimony they ALL CONCUR. I cannot recollect a SINGLE WRITER, prior to the council of *Nice*, who so much as intimates, either, that he himself denied the Divinity of Christ, or the Holy Trinity; or that the Christian Church denied it. The extracts which I have given, are a FAIR SPECIMEN of the manner in which the writers of that period express themselves on the subject, when it comes before them. In the next Letter, their testimony, to the same amount, but under a different aspect, will be briefly considered.

* BARON. *an.* 259, *an.* 301, *an.* 302, *an.* 303. &c. EUSEB. *De Martyr. Palest.* c. 11. AMBROS. *Exhort. ad Virgines.* I.

LETTER V.

Subject continued—Testimony drawn from the Heresies of the first four centuries—Remarks on that testimony.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

THE series of extracts from the writings of the early Fathers, which I laid before you in the preceding Letter, have, I trust, convinced you, that the doctrines of a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, and of the real and proper Divinity of the Son, were universally maintained in the primitive Church, and deemed of fundamental importance. But, for the purpose of illustrating this fact still further, I design, in the present Letter, to inquire what those opinions were on these subjects, which, during the first three or four centuries, were pronounced HERESIES, and of which the abettors were cast out of the church, as unworthy of a place among those who bore the christian name.

If it be a fact, as I suggested in my first Letter, that Orthodoxy, both in its opinions and spirit, is by no means congenial with depraved human nature, and that the leading features of Unitarianism have ever been most pleasing to a worldly taste; then we might naturally expect to find some of these features early beginning to disclose themselves. Accordingly, various forms of heresy respecting the Person and work of the blessed Redeemer, began to make their appearance very soon after the christian church was established; and have scarcely ceased, from that time to the present, to tarnish her lustre, and to disturb her peace. Some of the most remarkable of these will be cursorily noticed, and a brief account given of the estimation in which they were held, and the manner in which they were treated, by the great body of believers.

The first class of hereticks that I shall mention, is the *Cerinthians*. They were so called from *Cerintus*, who is alledged to have been a disciple of *Simon Magus*, and who lived in the apostolick age. Without entering into detail concerning the opinions of this man, on other

subjects, it is sufficient to state, that he denied the Divinity of Jesus Christ; believing that Jesus was a mere man, Born of *Joseph* and *Mary*; that a superangelick being, or influence, was united to this man, at his baptism, and thereby constituted him the Christ or Messiah; that this union, however, was not so complete as to make one person; and that it was the mere man who suffered on the cross,—the superangelick being having abandoned him, before he suffered. . What kind of reception these opinions met with from the christians of that day, the following testimonies will be sufficient to shew. *Irenæus* expressly declares, that the Evangelist "*John* designed by his Gospel to remove the error which was sown among men by *Cerinthus*." *Jerome*, quite as directly and strongly, bears witness to the same fact. "Last of, all," says he, "at the request of the bishops of *Asia*, *John* wrote his Gospel against *Cerinthus* and other HERETICKS, and especially against the doctrine of the *Ebionites*, "then beginning to appear, who say that Christ "did not exist before *Mary*."* *Irenæus* also relates, that the Apostle *John*, while he resided at

* *Catalog. Script. Eccles. in Joann.*

Ephesus, once going to bathe, and perceiving that *Cerinthus* was in the bath, came out again, hastily, saying, "Let us flee, lest the bath should fall, while *Cerinthus*, an ENEMY OF "THE TRUTH, is within."*

The *Cerinthians* were soon succeeded by the *Ebionites*, who appeared early in the second century, and took their name from *Ebion*, a disciple of *Cerinthus*, who seems to have adopted all his leading opinions. At any rate, he taught that Jesus Christ was a mere man. Dr. *Priestley* has laboured much to shew, that the great body of the early Jewish christians were Unitarians; and that they were called *Ebionites*, not from *Ebion*, their alledged leader, but from their poverty; being generally a poor and mean people. Hence he would make us believe, that they were by no means considered as *hereticks*; but that they formed the mass of the Jewish converts to christianity, during the apostolick age, and for some time afterwards. To those who have any disposition to adopt this opinion, I would recommend the perusal of the Revd. Dr. *Jamieson's Vindication of the Doctrine of Scripture, and of the Primitive Faith, concerning the*

* *Contra Hæreses*, Lib. III. § 4.

Deity of Christ; and also Bishop *Horsley's Tracts in controversy with Dr. Priestley*. In these works, if I do not mistake, they will find the most ample evidence that Dr. *Priestley's* allegation is totally unfounded; and that all antiquity testifies, that the *Ebionites* were a mere HERETICAL SECT, and not acknowledged as christians at all by the Orthodox church of their day. *Irenæus*, speaking of this sect, expresses himself thus: "They who say that he "was merely a man engendered of *Joseph*, DIE; "continuing in the bondage of the former disobedience; having to the last no conjunction "with the Word of God the Father, nor receiving freedom through the Son, according to "that saying of his own, *If the Son, therefore, "make you free, ye shall be free indeed*. But "not knowing Him who is the *Immanuel* of the "Virgin, they are DEPRIVED OF HIS GIFT, "WHICH IS ETERNAL LIFE."* Again he says, "The truly spiritual disciple will judge the "Jews, will judge the *Marcionites*, will judge "the *Valentinians*, (both of whom are acknowledged to have been hereticks) will judge the "*Ebionites*. How can they be SAVED, unless

* *Lib. III. cap. 21.*

“He who wrought their salvation on earth BE
 “GOD?”*—*Tertullian* thus speaks of this
 heresy—“*John* in his Epistle calls those chiefly
 “ANTI-CHRISTS, who denied that Christ had
 “come in the flesh, and who did not think that
 “Jesus was the Son of God. The former *Marcion*
 “held, the latter *Ebion*.”† Besides these
 testimonies, *Justin Martyr*, *Clemens Alexandri-*
nus, *Origen*, and *Jerome* all decisively speak of
Ebion as a HERETICK, and most of them speak
 of him, as separated from believers, and out of
 the way of salvation. *Jerome*, in one place,
 speaks of him as “THAT HERESIARCH EBION.”‡

In the second century also appeared *Marcion*,
 an Asiatick, who, being expelled from his father’s
 church for immorality, went to *Rome*, and
 espoused the cause of heresy. He denied the
 plenary Divinity of Christ, and taught that he
 had not a real, but only an apparent human
 body. *Marcion* seems to have taken his system
 from *Cerdo*, whom he found at *Rome*; and
 in his opinions respecting the person of Christ,
Valentinus, *Basilides*, *Bardasanes*, and *Manès*,
 all of the same century, appear to have sub-

* *Lib. IV. cap. 33. 4.* † *De Præscript. c. 33.* ‡ *In Galat. III.*

stantially concurred. *Marcion*, like modern Unitarians, mutilated the Gospels, and indeed the whole Bible, with great freedom, especially casting out every thing relating to the genealogy of Christ. Accordingly we find this man stigmatized as a HERETICK, not only by *Irenæus*, in terms of strong reprobation; but also by *Justin Martyr*, who formally opposed and confuted his errors, as DESTRUCTIVE HERESIES; by *Tertullian*, who wrote several books against him, in which he condemns him as a gross heretick, and speaks of him as having DEPARTED FROM THE FAITH AND THE CHURCH OF CHRIST; and by *Polycarp*, who not only denounced him as a heretick, but when *Marcion*, mortified at *Polycarp's* treatment of him, said,—“*Polycarp*, “acknowledge us;” the holy man of God replied—“I do acknowledge thee as the FIRST BORN “OF SATAN.” This anecdote is related by *Irenæus*, who was nearly contemporary both with *Polycarp* and *Marcion*.*

Concerning this heretick, *Cyprian* also writes in the following manner. “Our Lord, after his “resurrection, instructing his disciples how they

* *Contra Hæreses*. Lib. III. cap. 3. 4.

“should baptize, says, *Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* Here he gives an intimation of the TRINITY, in whose sacrament the nations were to be baptized. Does *Marcion* believe this Trinity? Does he believe the same Father, the Creator, as we believe in? Does he acknowledge the same only Son, Christ, born of the virgin *Mary*; who being the Word, was made flesh, and suffered for our sins? *Marcion*, and all other hereticks held a very different faith.”*

Toward the close of the second century, *Theodotus* the currier, appeared at *Rome*, and publicly taught that Jesus Christ was a mere man. He was immediately excommunicated from the church; and by all the principal writers of that time, and for several centuries afterwards, who had occasion to speak of heresies, he is denounced, not only as a HERETICK, but as one of the worst sort. Yet he and his followers, of course, asserted, like modern Unitarians, that theirs was the true Apostolical doctrine. In answer

* *Epist. 73.*

to this plea, as made by certain Unitarians, some time after *Theodotus, Caius*, a Presbyter of *Rome*, thus speaks—"They affirm that all the primitive christians, and the Apostles themselves, both received and taught these things which are spoken by them: and indeed that the true preaching (as they think) was preserved even to the time of *Victor*, who was the thirteenth Bishop of the city of *Rome* from *Peter*; but that from the time of *Zephyrinus*, who succeeded *Victor*, the truth was adulterated. And perhaps what they assert might appear credible, were it not that, in the first place, the Holy Scriptures directly oppose them. Then there are writings of certain brethren, prior to the age of *Victor*, which they have written in defence of the truth, against the Gentiles, and the hereticks of their own time. I mean *Justin*, and *Miltiades*, and *Tatian* and *Clement*, and many others besides; in ALL WHOSE BOOKS THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST IS MAINTAINED. For who is ignorant of the writings of *Irenæus*, and *Melito*, and the rest, PROCLAIMING CHRIST TO BE BOTH GOD and MAN? Of which number are the Psalms and Hymns composed by the faith-

“ful in the earliest times, which celebrate
 “Christ the word of God, ASCRIBING DIVINITY
 “TO HIM. Since, then, the ecclesiastical doc-
 “trine was preached so many years back, how
 “can it be that all, even to the time of *Victor*,
 “have proclaimed that doctrine of which they
 “speak? How are they not ashamed to frame
 “such falsehoods concerning *Victor*, when they
 “certainly know that *Victor* excommunicated
 “*Theodotus* the currier, the chief and parent of
 “this GOD-DENYING APOSTACY; being the first
 “that called Christ a mere man? For if *Victor*,
 “as they pretend, was persuaded of the truth
 “of their BLASPHEMOUS doctrine, how did
 “he cast out *Theodotus*, the inventor of the
 “heresy?”*

Contemporary with *Theodotus* was *Artemon*, who seems to have adopted a system very much the same with that of the Byzantine currier. He also was opposed by several of the principal fathers, condemned as a heretick, and excluded from the communion of the christian church.

About A. D. 220, arose *Noetus*, of *Smyrna*, an obscure man, of small talents, who broached

* *Euseb. Lib. V. cap. 28.*

certain opinions concerning Jesus Christ, which were a few years afterward adopted, in substance, by *Sabellius*, of *Africa*, from whom, on account of his superiour eloquence and conspicuity, the system which he maintained, has since received the name of *Sabellianism*. *Sabellius* rejected all distinction of *Persons* in God. He alledged that the Trinity was only *nominal* or *modal*, that is, that Father, Son and Holy Ghost, were only three *names* or *offices* of one and the same Hypostasis, or Person. He affirmed that Jesus Christ was truly God and man; but that the one, undivided Deity was incarnate in him. And hence he and his followers were sometimes called *Patripassians*, because they considered the Father as incarnate in Christ, and were charged with believing that the eternal Father might suffer. This doctrine the pious of that day considered as striking at the foundation of the system of redemption, and therefore condemned it as a fatal heresy. *Noetus* was solemnly excommunicated from the church, and his doctrine stigmatized as heretical, by two successive synods; and a few years afterward, *Sabellius*, and his opinions received the same treatment. A modification of the same

system having been adopted, about this time, by *Beryllus*, Bishop of *Bozrah*, he was opposed by *Origen*, and excluded from the body of the Orthodox. He remained, however, but a short time under this discipline; for, professing to be convinced by the reasoning of his antagonist, he returned to the communion of the church, and his party became extinct.

The heresy of *Praxeas* was transiently noticed in the preceding Letter. He was in substance a *Sabellian*; that is, he denied the distinction of Persons in the Godhead to be any thing more than nominal. He was formally condemned by *Zephyrinus*, Bishop of *Rome*. In consequence of his condemnation, he wrote and signed a recantation of his errors. But not long afterward he began to propagate them anew. "For some time," says *Tertullian*, "in a hypocritical manner he lay hid, craftily retaining life under ground; but at length he again burst forth," and it appears was again cast out of the church. *Tertullian* opposed him with zeal and vigour, and, if we may judge by a variety of circumstances, seems to have driven him off the field with triumph.

The next conspicuous advocate of erroneous opinions concerning the Saviour's Person, was *Paul of Samosata*. He was a vain, arrogant, artful, and licentious man, who gave great uneasiness to such of his neighbouring brethren as were friendly to exemplary piety. *Paul* coincided in opinion, almost entirely, with modern *Socinians*; in other words, he considered Christ as a mere man. But when his brethren convened to ascertain his sentiments, and give judgment concerning them, he manifested so much skill in the arts of concealment and equivocation, that, for a considerable time, they could decide nothing in his case. In the first Council that was convened to try him, he went so far as to declare, *on oath*, that he held no such opinions as were imputed to him; but that he adhered to the Apostolical decrees and doctrines. This gave so much pleasure to the members of the council, that, before its dissolution, they united in singing a hymn, in which they CELEBRATED THE PRAISES OF THE SAVIOUR AS GOD. But it was soon found that he had acted a disingenuous part, and was beginning again to propagate the opinions which he had disavowed. Another Council was called. Again he denied and pre-

varicated. At length *Malchion*, one of the clergy of the church of *Antioch*, had the address and the fidelity to interrogate him in such a manner, and to press him with such effect, that he could no longer escape detection. He was UNANIMOUSLY CONDEMNED AS A HERETICK, and DEPOSED FROM THE MINISTRY. The bishops who composed this Council also addressed an Epistle to the bishops of *Rome* and *Alexandria*, giving them an account of the opinions and character of *Paul*, for their information and warning; in which they exhibit a shocking picture of his conduct as well as his principles. What *Eusebius* thought of the opinions of this man, will appear from his saying concerning him—"The leader of the heresy at *Antioch* was discovered, and by all manifestly convicted of another doctrine than that which is preached by the WHOLE CATHOLICK CHURCH UNDER HEAVEN."* It seems to have been on this occasion, and prompted by the mortifying scenes to which the heresy of *Paul* had given rise, that *Felix*, bishop of *Rome*, addressed a letter to *Maximus* of *Alexandria*, in which he thus speaks—"We believe that our Saviour, Jesus Christ, was

* *EUSEB. Hist. Lib. VII. cap. 29.*

“born of the Virgin *Mary*; we believe that he
“himself is the ETERNAL GOD, and the Word,
“and not a man, whom God hath taken into
“himself, so as that man should be distinct from
“him; for the Son of God, being PERFECT GOD,
“was also made PERFECT MAN, being incarnate
“of the Virgin.”*

Early in the fourth century arose the celebrated *Arius* of *Alexandria*, an eloquent and popular ecclesiastick, who taught that Christ was the most exalted of all creatures, but still a creature, and of course unworthy of Divine honours; that this exalted creature was united to a human body; that in the person thus constituted there was nothing more of human nature than the *flesh*; the Word or Logos being the soul which animated this body. These notions were no sooner divulged than they made considerable noise; and *Arius*, being not only a man of art, acuteness, and eloquence, but also of exemplary morals, succeeded in obtaining many friends and advocates. A number of clergymen, and some of no small distinction, embraced and openly taught his heresy. In short, his

* FLEURY, b. 8. c. 4.

adherents became so numerous and bold, that measures of a more decisive character than usual were thought necessary by the friends of truth. Accordingly, A. D. 325, the Council of *Nice* was assembled, by command of the Emperor, to consider and decide on the case of *Arius*. This was the FIRST GENERAL COUNCIL, that ever convened in the christian church. Other Councils, comprising the ministers of large sections of the church, had often assembled before, and some of them were truly respectable in point of numbers. But the Council of *Nice* was the FIRST in which delegates from the whole christian church were summoned, by imperial authority, to meet on the business of the whole Church. In fact, it was only about that time that such a measure had become practicable. For it was only in that very year that *Constantine*, the first Christian Emperor, became the sole head of the empire.

When the Council came together, it was found extremely difficult to obtain from *Arius* any satisfactory explanation of his views. Like *Paul* of *Samosata*, he discovered a strong disposition to evade and equivocate, and actually baffled,

for some time, the attempts of the most ingenious and learned of the orthodox, to specify and bring to light his errors. At length, by adopting some expressions which were thought to be of sufficiently discriminating import, they succeeded in detecting and exhibiting his opinions in their real deformity. These opinions were condemned as heretical, by an almost unanimous vote of the Council, and a creed drawn up and signed, in substance the same with that which we now commonly call the *Nicene* Creed. Out of more than six hundred members of which it was composed, only twenty two or twenty three dissented from the final judgment, and of these dissentients, twenty at length yielded, and subscribed the Orthodox synodical creed. *Arius* and two of his adherents in the Synod, persisting in their refusal to subscribe, were not only condemned as hereticks, but also deposed from the ministry, and excommunicated from the church.

It may not be improper to mention that *Ace-sius*, a Novatian bishop, being present at the Council, was asked by the Emperor *Constantine*, whether he assented to its judgment? He repli-

ed—"The Council has decreed nothing new.
" So I have always understood the church to
" have received, EVEN FROM THE TIMES OF THE
" APOSTLES."*

The *Creed*, as drawn up and ratified by the Council of *Nice*, differed considerably from what is now commonly called the *Nicene Creed*; which was modified and made what it is, by several subsequent Councils. It originally stood thus—"We believe in one God, Almighty, maker of all things, visible and invisible: and in
" one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only begotten, that is
" of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father; by whom all things both in heaven and
" earth were made. Who for us men, and our
" salvation, came down from heaven, and was
" incarnate, and made man, and suffered, and
" the third day rose again, and ascended into
" heaven, and shall come again to judge the
" quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost.
" And the Catholick and Apostolick Church

* SOCRAT. *Hist. Lib. I. cap. 10.*

“anathematizes those who say, that there was a
“time when the Son of God was not; or that
“He was not before He was born; or that He
“was made out of nothing, or of another sub-
“stance or essence; or that He was created
“or mutable.”*

In estimating the degree of importance to be attached to this Creed, let it never be forgotten, that we are by no means to consider it as expressing the individual opinions of a few ecclesiastics; but as the digested, solemn judgment of THE WHOLE CHURCH, by its representatives, assembled for the express purpose of considering and deciding the controversy to which it related. We have here, then, the creed of the WHOLE CHRISTIAN WORLD, on the point in question, professedly and formally stated, in a single document. And, when those who are acquainted with the history of the Nicene Council, remember how amply the subject was discussed, and with what peculiar care and mature advisement, the strong language of their creed was selected and adjusted, they cannot fail of seeing in it evidence amounting to demonstra-

* SOCRAT. *Hist. Eccles.* Lib. I. cap. 8.

tion, that the doctrines of the Divinity and Personality of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and of the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, were universally deemed, at that time, as ESSENTIAL PARTS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

Hitherto we have contemplated cases of departure from the Orthodox faith, with respect to the Trinity in general, or the person of Jesus Christ in particular. But it appears that pious believers, from the earliest times to the present, were no less jealous of any deviation from the truth with respect to the Personality and Divinity of the Holy Spirit. A few years after the Arian heresy had been condemned by the Council of *Nice*, *Macedonius*, bishop of *Constantinople*, denied the Personality of the Holy Ghost; maintaining that what was called by this name in scripture, was only a Divine energy diffused throughout the universe, and nothing properly distinct from the Father and the Son. *Macedonius* was condemned and deposed as a heretick, by a Council at *Constantinople*, A. D. 360; and his opinions still more solemnly examined, and again condemned, by the second general Council, convened at *Constantinople*, by

order of *Theodosius*, A. D. 381. Here is another instance in which we see, not merely a distinguished individual, but the WHOLE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, deliberating on a new form of heresy, and solemnly deciding, that the Divinity and Personality of the Holy Spirit, and, by consequence, the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, were to be considered as fundamental articles of Christian truth.

It would be an easy matter to extend this list of heresies to a much greater length, if the limits which I have prescribed to myself did not forbid it. I might mention the *Carpocratians*, the *Basilideans*, and the *Montanists*, the followers of *Hermogenes*, of *Photinus*, of *Apollinaris*, and of many more; all of whom were unsound with respect to the Person of Christ; and all of whom were condemned as corrupters of the faith, and excluded from the community of Christians. Indeed, I can candidly assure you, that, after devoting much of my life to reading of this sort, I cannot recollect a SINGLE INSTANCE IN ALL ANTIQUITY, in which any individual, or body of individuals, who were known to deny the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, the true and

proper Divinity of the Saviour, or the Personality and Divinity of the Holy Spirit, were regarded as Christians, or were suffered to remain in the communion of the Church.

When we take a retrospect of these details, the result, I should think, cannot fail of being as conclusive as it is striking. Had the scriptural doctrine concerning the personal glory of Christ, been asserted, ever so pointedly by a single early writer only; or had merely a single form of heresy been condemned by the assembled church; the enemies of the truth might, perhaps, alledge some plausible ground for doubt on so important a subject. But, as if to preclude the possibility of doubt in any candid mind, almost every form of heresy now known, made its appearance within the first four centuries, and was, by name, denounced as a departure from the true faith, and its advocates put under the ban of the church. Those who considered the Saviour as a *mere man*; those who regarded him as *the first and most exalted of all creatures*; those who held to a mere *nominal*, but denied a *real* Trinity, that is, who held to a Trinity of *names*, but not of *persons*; and those

who rejected the Divinity and Personality of the Holy Spirit; in short the *Paulians*—the *Arians*—the *Semi-Arians*—the *Sabellians*—the *Apollinarians* and the *Macedonians*, were each pronounced, in their turn, by the universal church, to be corrupters of the truth, and were publicly treated as such. Here is no possibility of mistake; no ground for doubt. We are presented with an assemblage of decisions, which illustrate, support, and confirm each other; which form a perfect system; and which speak the most unequivocal language. Either the WHOLE CHURCH, from the time of the Apostles, to the fourth century, had entirely lost sight of the truth, and become the unanimous advocates of error, on the most fundamental of all doctrines; or the Orthodox opinions concerning the Person of the Saviour, and the Trinity of the Godhead, were, from the beginning, the genuine faith of Christians.

There is a further fact worthy of notice. It is the fact, that such hereticks were not only excluded from the catholick or general Church; but their right to the name of CHRISTIAN was solemnly and formally denied. This was the case

generally, and is particularly mentioned, by the early writers, with respect to those who avowed heretical opinions concerning the Trinity, or concerning the Person of Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit. And, accordingly, all BAPTISMS performed by such hereticks, were considered as NULL AND VOID, and when those who had received baptism from them, were disposed to return into the bosom of the Church, they were always re-baptized, or, to speak with strict propriety, baptized, by the Orthodox ministers who received them. I might produce a number of witnesses who abundantly testify to these facts. Those who have any considerable knowledge of the history of the early church, know that *Cyprian*, *Tertullian*, *Lactantius*, *Jerome*, *Augustine* and others, speak of them as established ecclesiastical practices.

I have hitherto produced the testimony of the early Christians themselves, as to the doctrines which were taught, and as to the point of light in which departures from those doctrines, were considered by the body of the faithful. But it is quite as easy to go a step further, and to shew, that the Pagans understood the Christians to hold and teach as has been stated.

Pliny certainly understood that the primitive christians considered and worshipped Christ as a Divine Being. Having occasion, as Pro-consul of *Bithynia* and *Pontus*, to transmit to the Emperor *Trajan* an account of the principles and conduct of some christians, who had been brought before him as a magistrate, he expresses himself concerning them in this language: "They affirmed that this was the whole amount of their crime or error, that they were wont, on a certain day, to assemble before it was light, and to SING A HYMN TO CHRIST AS GOD."* The very fact of singing hymns to Christ, was enough to determine the point of light in which they viewed his Person. It was a solemn act of WORSHIP, which, upon the principles continually avowed by all christians, could have been offered only to Jehovah. But we are not left to argue from mere inference. *Pliny* tells us explicitly that the christians AVOWED that it was to CHRIST AS GOD that they sung praises.

Hierocles, president of *Bithynia*, and afterward governor of *Alexandria*, in both which offices he manifested great zeal against christi-

* *PLIN. Epist. Lib. 10. Ep. 97. 98.*

anity, in his abridgment of the life of *Apollonius Tyanaeus*, by *Philostratus*, undertakes to compare the wisdom and dignity of the heathen, with the folly and superstition of Christians. "We, indeed," says he, "do not account the person (*Apollonius*) who has performed such actions, GOD, but a man favoured of the Gods. But they, because of a few miracles, PROCLAIM JESUS TO BE GOD."*

Celsus, the Epicurean philosopher, who lived a little before *Origen*, and who wrote with great bitterness against christianity, beyond all doubt considered the Christians as believing in the Divinity of Christ. He says, expressly, that "Jesus was owned by Christians to be the SON OF GOD."† He says, moreover, that "Jesus, elated with his great powers, DECLARED HIMSELF TO BE GOD."‡ And again, *Origen*, in answering *Celsus*, brings us acquainted with a similar charge. "He (*Celsus*) objects to us," says *Origen*, "I know not how often, that we believe Jesus, though possessed of a mortal body, to BE GOD, and that we SEEM TO BE SERIOUS IN THIS."§ These charges *Origen*

* See BURGH'S *Inquiry*. p. 403. † ORIGEN. *contra Celsum*. L. I. p. 21.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 22. § *Ibid.* Lib. III. p. 135.

does not deny; but, on the contrary, avows that Christians DID so esteem and honour the Son of God.

Lucian, in one of his Dialogues, takes notice of the christian worship. Personating a christian instructing a catechumen, he makes the catechumen ask this question, "By whom shall I swear?" The christian instructor replies, "By the God that reigns on high; the great, immortal, heavenly God, and the Son of the Father, and the Spirit proceeding from the Father, ONE IN THREE AND THREE IN ONE."* This *Lucian* had evidently learned from the christian doctrine of the Trinity. He elsewhere directly charges the christians with "worshipping their crucified impostor," as he blasphemously styles our blessed Lord.

But there is no need of adducing further testimony to establish the fact, that the primitive Christians were understood by their Pagan neighbours to consider and worship Christ as God. There is nothing in early history more indubitable. A number of the Fathers express-

* *LUCIAN. Philopat.*

ly state the fact, and plead guilty to the charge; but declare, that the sole ground of their worshipping Christ is, that they consider him as TRULY GOD; for that they abhor the thought of giving divine honours and worship to a creature.

If I do not mistake, Unitarians acknowledge, without hesitation, that, after the council of *Nice*, what are called the Orthodox doctrines, respecting the Trinity, and the Person of Christ, were the prevailing doctrines of the church; and that those who rejected them were cast out as hereticks; their ordinances pronounced invalid; and their congregations denied the name of Christian Churches. Further than this, then, there is no need of pursuing the train of testimony. From the council of *Nice* in the fourth century, till the reformation in the sixteenth, no one disputes that the doctrines of three Persons in the Godhead, and, of course, of the Divinity of the Saviour, were universally maintained, by those who were considered as correct believers, and the rejection of them regarded as an essential departure from the truth. But it ought not to be forgotten, that, from the rise of the Papal Beast until that of the Pro-

testant Reformers, there was a constant succession of Witnesses for the truth, who separated themselves from the Man of sin; refused to sanction his corruptions; formed a distinct communion; and maintained a constant testimony in favour of the simplicity of the gospel. It may be worth while to inquire, what these witnesses held, with regard to the principal points in controversy between the Orthodox and Unitarians. And, if I am not deceived, it will be easy to shew that they all concurred with the former.

The first that I shall mention in this list are the *Paulicians*, who arose in the seventh century, in *Asia Minor*, and may be considered as forming the most conspicuous and important portion of the true Church, in opposition to the Papacy, for 150 or 200 years. They appear to have received their name from their enemies, on account of their great attachment to the Epistles of Paul the Apostle. While they rejected all the principal corruptions of the catholic Church; such as the use of *Images*, the worship of the Virgin *Mary*, &c. which had even then begun to gain currency; and while

they acknowledged but two Sacraments, and appear to have been, in the main, scriptural in their views and use of them;—they concurred with the general Church in maintaining the doctrines of the TRINITY, and of the DIVINITY and ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST, and constantly represented them as being the foundation of christian hope.*

The very same statement may be made concerning *Claudius of Turin*, and his followers, in the ninth century. While they separated themselves from the corrupt nominal christians around them, and publicly renounced all the leading errors of Popery, they maintained with zeal the Divinity and Atonement of the Saviour, as the life and glory of the gospel system.

To these succeeded the *Waldenses* and *Albigenses*; or rather there is reason to believe, that the disciples of *Claudius of Turin*, settling in the vallies of *Piedmont*, were the parents of

* Our information concerning the *Paulicians* is far from being ample. The excellent Mr. *Milner's* view of them is probably correct. With him Mr. *Gibbon*, as to all the points which are important in this controversy, coincides. *Decline and Fall*. &c. chapter 54.

both the *Albigenses* and *Waldenses*, who received their names from the places of their residence. That these venerable Witnesses for the truth, maintained, unanimously, and with zeal, the doctrine of the Trinity, and of the Divinity of Christ, in correspondence with the opinions of those who are now called the Orthodox, is one of the most indubitable facts in all ecclesiastical history. Dr. *Priestley*, indeed, while he acknowledges that the *Waldenses* were Trinitarians, tells us that the first traces of the revival of the Unitarian doctrine were to be found among the *Albigenses*. Of these "traces," I have never been able to meet with the smallest appearance, that deserved to be considered as even plausible. In fact, the *Waldenses* and *Albigenses* were undoubtedly the same people, inhabiting different countries, and deriving, from that circumstance, different names. In the Papal edicts against the *Albigenses*, they are expressly styled *Waldenses*, and condemned as such. They were persecuted as professing the faith of the *Waldenses*; and they uniformly accepted the title when it was given them, and thought themselves honoured by it. This being so, it is not easy to see how the *Albigenses* could

be Unitarians, while the *Waldenses* were decisively Orthodox. But we have better evidence than that of the mere inferential kind. *John Paul Perrin*, one of the pastors of the Waldensian Churches, gives several confessions of faith, and other authentick documents, by which he makes it appear that the *Waldenses* and *Albigenses* were entirely agreed in doctrine; and that the latter, as well as the former, maintained, in the most pointed manner that can well be imagined, a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, and the true and proper Divinity of the Saviour. Under the head of the "Old *Albigenses*," as well as the *Waldenses*, he gives the following articles as held by them, and as "handed down" "from father to son for several hundred years," prior to the date of these Confessions.

Concerning the Trinity, and the Person of the blessed Redeemer, they speak in the following language: "We do believe that there is one "God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy "Ghost."

In an "Ancient Catechism," for the instruction of their youth, the following questions and

answers are found: "*Question.*" "Dost thou believe in the Holy Ghost." "*Answer.* Yes, "I do believe. For the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is ONE PERSON OF THE TRINITY; and, according to the Divinity, is equal to the Father and the Son."

"*Question.* Thou believest God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: thou hast, therefore, three Gods."

"*Answer.* I have not three; for although there are THREE PERSONS, yet, notwithstanding, there is but ONE ESSENCE."

In a "Brief Exposition of the Apostle's creed," in early use among that people, there is the following passage:

"We believe in God the Father, Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, which God is ONE TRINITY; as it is written I *John* V. 7. *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.*"

Nor ought it ever to be forgotten, that while these excellent Witnesses for Christ, in a dark world, maintained the doctrine of three Persons in the Godhead, and the Divinity of the Son of God, they also maintained in their purity all those precious doctrines which have been regarded by the true Church, in all ages, as fundamental;—such as the original corruption of our nature—the atonement of the Saviour—justification by his righteousness alone—and the necessity of regeneration and sanctification by his Holy Spirit. Nay, not only did this system distinguish those humble followers of the Redeemer; but I am persuaded it would be perfectly easy to demonstrate, that, in proportion as simple, humble piety, has been manifested in any portion or period of the church, just in the same proportion have those who displayed it, been patrons of the same humiliating and purifying doctrines.

When, after the *Waldenses*, *John Wickliffe*, of *Great-Britain*, and *John Huss*, and *Jerome*, of *Bohemia*, appeared as witnesses of the truth, the Divinity of Christ, and his atoning sacrifice for sin, were radical principles of their sys-

tem. Nay, it is not going too far to say, that their testimony in behalf of the truth, and their opposition to the corrupt church of *Rome*, were in no respects more conspicuous, or more precious, than in teaching men to transfer their confidence for acceptance with God, and eternal life, from the miserable superstitious dreams of human merit, to the atoning blood, the perfect righteousness, and the prevalent intercession of an Almighty Saviour. This was, in fact, the ESSENCE of what they did. Their attacks on particular superstitions were the body and the members; while that to which I have just alluded, was the vital principle of that precious cause to which they devoted their lives.

When we come down to the Reformation by *Luther*, and his ever-to-be venerated coadjutors, the same fact appears, in a still more luminous and interesting view. Still Jehovah in a Trinity of Persons, and the atoning sacrifice of Him who was very God and very man, *that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life*, are not only found to make a part of the system of those blessed men; but to form the FOUNDATION, nay the ALPHA and

the **OMEGA**, the **BEGINNING** and the **END**, the **LIFE** and the **GLORY** of their system. Yes, every one knows, that the friends of the Reformation, whether led, under God, by *Zuingle*, in *Switzerland*, by *Luther*, in *Germany*, by *Calvin*, in *Geneva* and *France*, by *Cranmer*, in *England*, by *Knox*, in *Scotland*, or by other illustrious servants of Christ, in other parts of *Europe*, were **ALL AGREED IN THIS GENERAL SYSTEM**. I defy any one to produce me a single individual, during that eventful period, who materially departed from any of the doctrines embraced in this system, without being, as soon as known, stigmatized as a heretick, and cast out of the Church.

Accordingly, (for nothing is so decisive on a subject like this as matter of fact) when the different Protestant Churches, in the sixteenth century, undertook to frame and publish their ecclesiastical Formulas, and Creeds, they **ALL, WITHOUT A SINGLE EXCEPTION**, distinctly recognized in those creeds, the unity of God; the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead; the eternal Generation and Divinity of the Son; the union of his Divine and human natures in one Per-

son, and the distinct Personality and Divinity of the Holy Spirit. The most cursory glance at the Confessions of Faith of the Churches of *England, Scotland, France, Holland, Geneva, Switzerland, Germany, Bohemia, Poland*, not to mention several others, will convince any one, not only that the articles of doctrine above mentioned, were all universally received in those churches; but also, that, from the careful and pointed manner in which they are stated, they were regarded as fundamental articles of the christian system. Whence this remarkable harmony? How are we to account for it, that, amidst so much diversity of situation and habit, and while they discovered so much readiness to throw off the superstitions of the Church of *Rome*, they should still unanimously concur in maintaining a set of doctrines, which, if Unitarians be correct, are entirely and grossly idolatrous?

I know it has been said by Unitarians, that the Reformers *found* the doctrines of the Trinity, and the Deity and atonement of Christ, already consecrated by the Formulas and Catechisms of the Romish Church; that their

own prejudices were in favour of them; and that they had neither sufficient light, nor sufficient boldness to reject them, while they cast off the trammels of some more prominent and appalling corruptions. This plea is at once weak and erroneous. When the Reformers had deliberately dared to draw down upon themselves the hottest vengeance of the Papacy, by openly teaching that the Bishop of *Rome* was Anti-Christ, and that the Redeemer alone was the Head of the church; when they had ventured, without scruple, to denounce as unscriptural abominations, Purgatory, Transubstantiation, Prayers for the dead, Image worship, the worship of the Virgin *Mary*, Indulgences, withholding the Scriptures, and the cup in the Eucharist, from the common people, and all that enormous system of human merit, by which the Pope and his emissaries, had so long contrived to fill their own coffers, and to enslave the minds of men:—I say, when they dared openly to attack all these as unscriptural abominations—is it supposeable that they would be very timid or scrupulous about rejecting a doctrine, which was far less connected with the interests or the feelings of any portion of the

community, in or out of power? Now, that, in these circumstances, when they discovered so little backwardness to reject whatever the BIBLE did not appear to them to sanction; and when they actually differed among themselves, respecting church government, respecting the Saviour's presence in the Eucharist, respecting the propriety of placing pictures and images in churches, and some other smaller points;—that they should ALL CONCUR, amidst their diversities of residence, and light, and early habit, in maintaining the doctrines alluded to, and not merely maintaining them, but in laying the UTMOST STRESS upon them, as ESSENTIAL TO THE GOSPEL; is surely conclusive proof that they retained these doctrines, not because the Church had long believed them; but because they were persuaded that they found them in the WORD OF GOD.

But it is an utter misrepresentation to say, that the venerable Reformers merely *retained* the doctrines alluded to, as they found them in the Romish Church. I know that some modern writers are fond of representing the Reformation, as a mere successful effort, on the part of

a few discerning and good men, to shake off the tyranny of the Pope, and an oppressive burden of Papal rites and superstitions. But this view of the subject is altogether inadequate, and even false. That which the Reformers were called upon, and were employed as instruments, by a sovereign God, to accomplish, was, not merely to demolish a fabrick of ecclesiastical despotism; not merely to take away a mass of ceremonial corruptions; but it was to RESTORE CHRIST TO THAT THRONE IN HIS CHURCH, which had been for ages filled by human idols. It is true, the doctrines of a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, and of the Deity of Jesus Christ, had been long nominally maintained in the Church of *Rome*; but they were maintained in name only. While the votaries of that wretched system *said* much, and *wrote* much, concerning the Divinity of Christ, and the atonement of Christ, they, in fact, made little of either. Canonized saints, relicks, indulgences, and an impious system of human merit, were substituted in the place of *that blood which cleanseth from all sin*. To bring back the doctrine of CHRIST CRUCIFIED, from its long banishment, and its miserable pervers-

sions, may be said, without hesitation, to have been THE GRAND OBJECT OF THE REFORMERS ; and the object in which they were ALL united. Other things were evidently regarded as important, just in proportion to the degree in which they were subservient to this, their FIRST AND HIGHEST PURPOSE. The doctrines espoused by the Orthodox, then, in opposition to Unitarians, may, with just as much propriety and emphasis, be styled THE DOCTRINES OF THE REFORMATION, as any opposition to Papal despotism, or Papal superstitions, may be called the WORK OF THE REFORMATION ; and to insinuate the contrary, is to betray either an ignorance or a prejudice truly extraordinary.

In the review of all this, I entreat you, my christian Brethren, to lay your hands on your hearts, and then say, whether those doctrines which, besides their plain scriptural warrant, have been embraced, with affectionate attachment, by THE PIOUS IN ALL AGES ; which were the doctrines of ALL THE EARLY FATHERS, who say any thing on the subject ; which NO INDIVIDUAL, from the time of the Apostles, to the time of *Luther*, is known to have openly rejec-

ted, without being cast out of the Church; which were the doctrines of the *Paulicians*, the *Waldenses*, the *Albigenses*, the followers of *Wickliffe*, the *Bohemian Brethren*, and ALL THE WITNESSES FOR THE TRUTH, during the dark ages; and finally which ALL THE REFORMERS from Popery concurred in maintaining, as the very ESSENCE OF THE GOSPEL—I repeat it—Lay your hands on your hearts and say, whether these doctrines can be any other than *the faith once delivered to the saints*, and for which all christians are commanded “EARNESTLY TO CONTEND?”

LETTER VI.

*Unitarians reject the inspiration of the Scriptures—
Difference between them and the Orthodox with respect to the proper office of Reason in examining Revelation—Specimens of Unitarian exposition—Consequences of this mode of expounding the word of God.*

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

As the Unitarians, in their controversies with the Orthodox, constantly appeal to the SCRIPTURES, and profess to cherish a very profound respect for them, it has probably appeared to many that they view the inspired volume in the same light with the Orthodox. They frequently speak of the reverence and diligence with which they and their friends study it. They insist upon referring every question to it as a standard. They often quote, with much emphasis, the celebrated saying of *Chillingworth*, "THE BIBLE, THE BIBLE IS THE RELI-

"GION OF PROTESTANTS." They object to *Creeds* and *Confessions*, lest they should come into competition with the Scriptures as a rule of faith. They frequently charge the advocates of evangelical truth with being backward to appeal to this standard, and with being governed by prejudice, or love of system, or feeling, rather than by the Word of God. In short, you would sometimes be led, by their language, to suppose, that none who bear the christian name, either feel so much reverence for the sacred Scriptures, as Unitarians, or lay so much stress on their authority, as an ultimate resort in controversy.

But this is a mere illusion: and a very small acquaintance with their writers and preachers will be quite sufficient to dissipate it. I asserted, in the first Letter, that Unitarians commonly deny the inspiration of the Scriptures, and produced some testimony in support of my assertion; but the subject is worthy of more particular notice. In my view the manner in which they consider and treat the Scriptures, is, next to their rejection of the Redeemer's true glory, one of the most conclusive evidences of the vital

rottenness of their system. Some Unitarians, indeed, profess, in words, to believe in the inspiration of the Word of God ; but even *they*, when they come to explain themselves, plainly shew that it is not the *reality*, but the *name* only, of inspiration which they admit. They set out with a principle concerning the inspired volume, which almost entirely nullifies it, at once, as a rule of faith. According to them, *Reason*, after all, is the only safe and adequate guide. They assume it to be the prerogative of reason to sit in judgment upon Revelation, and to modify, or expunge from it, every thing which that reason cannot comprehend, or does not approve. Of course, whenever they meet with a passage which appears hostile to their general views, it gives them no serious difficulty. They find an easy way, either to silence it, or to make it speak agreeably to their wishes.

It is true the Orthodox also profess to employ reason in their inquiries respecting Revelation ; but the essential difference between them and Unitarians, as to this point, lies here. The Orthodox maintain, that our own reason is altogether insufficient to guide us in spiritual things ;

that we stand in need of a revelation from heaven, to inform us concerning the Divine character, concerning our own condition, and the means of obtaining eternal happiness; and that such a revelation has actually been given to us, to enlighten our darkness, and bring us acquainted with what we otherwise could not have known. They suppose, therefore, that since it is the weakness and utter insufficiency of our reason, that renders a revelation necessary, nothing can be more presumptuous, or indeed more irrational, than to undertake to judge WHAT OUGHT TO BE REVEALED. They conclude, of course, that the only legitimate province of reason, in examining revelation, embraces two points of inquiry, viz. *first*—Is there evidence that a revelation has been given? And *secondly*—What does that revelation, in fact, contain? In other words, have we satisfactory proof that GOD HAS SPOKEN? and, if so, WHAT HAS HE SAID? Having ascertained thus much, the Orthodox suppose that the proper office of reason there ends. For if God have spoken, we have nothing to do but humbly to receive what He has revealed; to submit ourselves without reserve to his teaching. Whatever is

clearly and indisputably taught in Scripture, they consider themselves as bound implicitly to believe, without another question. To undertake to judge whether that which we find in a revelation confessed to be from God, is reasonable and credible, or not, is really neither more nor less than undertaking to judge WHAT GOD OUGHT TO REVEAL; while the facts, that we need, and have received a revelation, pre-suppose, from the very nature of the case, that we are not capable of judging. Is not such an assumption as absurd as it is impious? Is it not, in fact, as Lord *Bacon* long ago observed, treating God just as we should treat a SUSPECTED WITNESS, that is, measuring his title to our credence, not by his *personal character*, but by the *probability* of his testimony? Is it not practically saying, that we cannot, and will not, rely on the veracity of God; that we cannot and will not trust Him further than we can see; in one word, that we will give credit to the MATTER, but not to the AUTHOR of Revelation? Is this *receiving the kingdom of God as a little child*, without which, we are told, that *no one can enter therein*?

But Unitarians view this subject in a very different light. After having applied their reason to the *evidences* of revelation, and ascertained that it is from God; they consider themselves as at perfect liberty to go further, and to apply it to the alledged *facts* and *doctrines* of revelation; to inquire whether these facts and doctrines are *reasonable* and *credible* in themselves; that is, whether they are such as it BECOMES GOD TO REVEAL; and if they judge them NOT to be such, to REJECT THEM. In plain language, they consider it as the province of reason not only to decide whether the Bible is God's word or not; but also whether the contents of the Bible are reasonable and worthy of God, or otherwise. Every thing found in it that appears agreeable to their notions of reason, they receive as credible. That which they cannot reconcile with reason, or which their reason cannot comprehend, they reject as false; insisting either, that the passage which contains it is spurious, and ought to be expunged; or, that it is impossible it should mean what the Orthodox suppose it to mean; or, if it plainly mean that, and cannot be construed to mean any thing else, that the sacred writer has BLUNDER-

ED, or been led by some POPULAR PREJUDICE to express himself in an UNWARRANTABLE MANNER!

Nay, some Unitarians of great name and influence have gone so far as to maintain, without ceremony, that certain doctrines are so manifestly irrational and incredible, that they ought not to be received, even if the Scriptures DID APPEAR ever so *explicitly* and *decisively* to teach them. The spirit of their argument is precisely the same with that of the celebrated infidel, Mr. *Hume*, against Miracles. It is this. "The doctrines in question," say they, "are so absurd and incredible, that the presumption against them is stronger than ANY EVIDENCE in their favour POSSIBLY CAN BE. In other words, these doctrines are so perfectly revolting to the human mind, that no testimony CAN BE CONCEIVED strong enough to command our belief of them; because no testimony in their favour, CAN be so STRONG, as that which their manifest absurdity and impossibility presents against them. There is, from the very nature of things, a presumption, against their truth, which NO EVIDENCE, HOWEVER CLEAR, can

“overcome.”—Unitarians have applied this argument to the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation and Atonement of the Son of God, and the endless duration of future punishment. They utterly deny, indeed, that these doctrines ARE found in Scripture: but they do not hesitate to say, that if they WERE found there, they would not believe them, but would rather have recourse to almost any assignable supposition, than sustain the testimony in their favour. They would say, “These doctrines CANNOT be true. “It is IMPOSSIBLE that we should believe, or “that we should be required to believe, such “gross absurdities. There MUST be some mistake about the matter. The passage in question has been dishonestly inserted by some “interested transcriber; or it has been “undoubtedly introduced by accident or carelessness; or, the sacred writer, if he really wrote “thus, reasoned inconclusively, or thought proper to countenance, out of respect to popular “delusion, what he knew to be false: at ANY “RATE, we are RESOLVED not to receive such “doctrines as coming from God, WHATEVER “MAY BE THE EVIDENCE WITH WHICH THEY “ARE ATTENDED.”

It is, indeed, readily acknowledged, that if we *were* to find in Scripture propositions plainly and undeniably CONTRADICTIONARY to reason, we could not receive them. If, for example, we were to find there the assertion, that something is and is NOT, at the same time; that God is ONE and THREE in the SAME SENSE; or that two beings, or quantities, are EQUAL to each other, and UNEQUAL, at the same time, and in the same respect; we might venture to say, without hesitation, it is incredible that such propositions should be true. No testimony whatever can establish that which is, in its own nature, self-evidently, impossible and absurd. But is any thing maintained by the Orthodox of this character? Do they believe that God is one and three in the same sense? Do they not, with one voice, as was observed in a former Letter, solemnly declare the contrary? Where, then, is the *contradiction*? There is manifestly, nay, I will venture to say, there is SELF-EVIDENTLY, none; any more than there is in saying that man is *mortal* and *immortal* at the same time; when we know that *both are true*, though of different parts of his constitution. I repeat, then, a number of the doctrines of revelation are

ABOVE our portion of reason ; but none of them CONTRARY to it. A man, indeed, may say, " It is "contrary to my reason, that any being should "be every where equally present at the same "time ; or that any being should create worlds "out of nothing ." Or, a malefactor, at the bar of justice, when the judge addresses him on the importance of supporting the authority of the laws, and assures him of the necessity, and even benevolence, of awarding exemplary punishment to transgressors ; may declare, and perhaps with truth, that such principles appear to him in the highest degree revolting and unreasonable. I say, some persons may object and argue thus ; nay, they have done so. But when they do it, they must be content to be thought very foolish and absurd by all rational men. Every one will say, they are neither *competent* nor *impartial* judges. Now, among all the truths of revelation, as held by the enlightened and sober among the Orthodox, there is nothing in any other sense, or in any greater degree, opposed to reason, than many of the acknowledged perfections of God are opposed to it. And of *them* we can only say, not that they are really *opposed* to it, but that they are *above* it. We can only say, as

the Bible says, when speaking of those perfections, *Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it.*

That, in the foregoing remarks, I have done no injustice to Unitarians, will, I presume, be made perfectly manifest by the following quotations from some of their most distinguished writers. Indeed, when the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the scriptures is once abandoned, and every man feels himself at liberty to reject whatever he finds in the Bible, which appears unreasonable to *his own mind*, there is no longer any uniform standard, and we ought not to wonder at any licentiousness of interpretation or rejection that can afterward occur.

Dr. *Priestley*, while inculcating great respect for the Scriptures, expresses himself thus—
“Not that I consider the books of scripture as
“*inspired*, and, on *that* account, entitled to this
“high degree of respect; but as authentick
“records of the dispensations of God to man-
“kind, with every particular of which we can-
“not be too well acquainted.” In another place,
in the same work, he says—“If you wish to

“know what, in my opinion, a christian is
 “bound to believe with respect to the scrip-
 “tures, I answer, that the books which are
 “universally received as authentick, are to be
 “considered as faithful records of past transac-
 “tions. No christian is answerable for more
 “than this. The writers of the books of scrip-
 “ture were *men*, and, therefore, *fallible*; but
 “all that *we* have to do with them, is in the
 “character of *historians* and *witnesses* of what
 “they *heard* and *saw*. Of course, their credi-
 “bility is to be estimated, LIKE THAT OF OTHER
 “HISTORIANS, viz. from the circumstances in
 “which they wrote, and the biases to which
 “they might be subject. Like all other histo-
 “rians, they were LIABLE TO MISTAKES, with
 “respect to things of small moment, because
 “they might not give sufficient attention to
 “them; and with respect to their *reasoning*,
 “we are fully at liberty to judge of it, as well
 “as that of other men, by a due consideration
 “of the propositions they advance, and the ar-
 “guments they alledge.”* The same writer
 also says elsewhere, “I think I have shewn

* *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*—Part II. *Preface*, p. 13.
 again *Letter V*.

“that the apostle *Paul* OFTEN REASONS INCONCLUSIVELY; and therefore that he wrote as ANY OTHER PERSON of his turn of mind and thinking, and in his situation, WOULD HAVE WRITTEN, WITHOUT ANY PARTICULAR INSPIRATION.”* And again “I have frequently declared myself not to be a believer in the INSPIRATION of the EVANGELISTS and APOSTLES AS WRITERS.”† He also, on a variety of occasions, charges the sacred writers with giving “lame accounts,” “inconclusive reasonings,” and “improper quotations.”‡ Mr. *Evanson*, another distinguished English Unitarian, says, without ceremony, “The Evangelical histories CONTAIN GROSS AND IRRECONCILABLE CONTRADICTIONS.”§

Mr. *Belsham* says, that in the Gospel of *John*, our Saviour sometimes uses metaphors “of the most OBSCURE and OFFENSIVE kind;” that *Paul*, in his Epistles, introduces “many harsh and uncommon figures;” that the author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* indulges himself in an INGENIOUS, but FORCED and FANCIFUL analogy,

* *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, Vol. II. p. 370.

† *Letters to Dr. Horsley*, part I. p. 132.

‡ *Letters to Mr. Burn—Letter 12th.* § *Dissonance*, p. 1.

between the Mosaic institutions and the Christian dispensation; that *Jesus Christ* was born fifteen years before the death of *Augustus*, and at least two years after the death of *Herod*; "a fact which COMPLETELY FALSIFIES THE "WHOLE NARRATIVE contained in the preliminary chapters of *Matthew* and *Luke*;" that to argue the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, or even his pre-existence and superiour nature, from the strong and "HYPERBOLICAL" expressions used by the Evangelist *John*, "UNSUPPORTED by any other sacred writers," is drawing a grand conclusion from very "PRECARIOUS" premises.* *Damm*, a German Unitarian, in the same strain, says, that "the writings of *Moses* were inspired, in so far as they instruct us concerning God, and lead us to God. He could know the age of the world NO BETTER THAN WE DO. The history of the fall IS A FABLE; and though there is MUCH TRUTH in *Moses*' history, the DRESS IS POETICK. In *Joshua*, the circumstance of the conquest of *Canaan*, ARE FICTITIOUS. The books of *Samuel* contain a MULTITUDE OF FALSHOODS. There are NO PROPHECIES in the *Psalms*. *Daniel* is full

* *Cath. Inquiry*. p. 12, 19, 186, &c.

“of stories CONTRIVED OF EXAGGERATED by
 “SUPERSTITION. With the other Prophets,
 “CHRISTIANS HAVE NO CONCERN.”* *Eichhorn*,
 another German Unitarian, accounts for prophe-
 cy by referring it rather to HUMAN PENETRA-
 TION and INGENIOUS CONJECTURE, than to inspi-
 ration. *Semler*, of the same country, on 2 *Pe-*
ter I, 21, where it is written, *The prophecy*
came not in old time by the will of man; but
holy men of God spake as they were moved by
the Holy Ghost, remarks, “*Peter* speaks there
 “ACCORDING TO THE CONCEPTION OF THE JEWS.
 “The Prophets may have delivered THE OFF-
 “SPRING OF THEIR OWN BRAINS AS DIVINE
 “REVELATIONS.†”

Let none say, “These last are *German Uni-*
 “tarians, whose extravagances are well known,
 “and between whom and the Unitarians in this
 “country there is no alliance.” Rely on it, my
 friends, whoever may endeavour to persuade
 you to believe the contrary, the fundamental
 principles of both are the same; the one have
 learned to go a little further than the others,

* *ESKINE'S Sketches of Church History, &c.* Vol. I. p. 84.

† *ESKINE'S Sketches, &c.* p. 71.

and are only less restrained by publick opinion; but the others will probably soon overtake them. Certainly they are on the same road.

These quotations clearly go to show, not only that the writers whose words they are, virtually reject the inspiration of the scriptures, (for what is that inspiration worth, which admits of "*inconclusive reasoning*"—"gross mistakes"—"*lame accounts*"—and deliberate sacrifices to "*popular prejudices and delusions?*") but also that they stand ready to expunge from the sacred volume, or to explain away, any passages which do not entirely accord, with their pre-determined opinions. Thus, instead of BRINGING THEIR OPINIONS TO THE BIBLE, to be tried and decided by it, as the only perfect standard; they BRING THE BIBLE TO THEIR OPINIONS, to be judged, modified, and decided by THEM. What is this, but making their own reason the supreme judge of truth, instead of the word of Him who is the source of all reason? What is it, in effect, but every man's making HIS OWN NOTIONS (for these are the dictates of *his reason*) his highest rule of faith? And wherein does this essentially differ from the doctrine of the DEIST, who acknowl-

edges that there is much truth in the Bible, but denies its inspiration, and receives only so much of its contents as accords with his views of what is reasonable?

But the following extracts speak a still more daring language, and must, I think, banish all doubt from the minds of those who have heretofore entertained any, respecting the deep and thorough corruption of Unitarian principles, in regard to the scriptures.

Dr. Priestley, in his *History of Early Opinions*, with a degree of frankness which always distinguished him, declares, that even "if the doctrine of the Trinity HAD BEEN FOUND IN THE SCRIPTURES, it would have been impossible for any reasonable man to believe it, as it implies a *contradiction*, which no miracles can prove."* The same writer, commenting on John VI. 62, *What, and if you shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?* and endeavouring to shew that it affords no evidence of Christ's existence before he appeared in this world, uses the following wonderful language—

* Vol. I. p. 48.

"Though not satisfied with any interpretation
 "that has been given of this extraordinary pas-
 "sage; yet rather than believe our Saviour to
 "have existed in any other state, before the cre-
 "ation of the world, or to have left some state
 "of great dignity and happiness when he came
 "hither, I *would have recourse* to the old and
 "exploded Socinian idea of Christ's actual as-
 "cent into heaven, or of his IMAGINING that he
 "had been carried up thither, in a vision, which,
 "like that of *Paul*, he had NOT BEEN ABLE TO
 "DISTINGUISH FROM A REALITY. Nay, I would
 "not build an article of faith of such magnitude
 "ON THE CORRECTNESS OF JOHN'S RECOLLEC-
 "TION, AND REPRESENTATION OF OUR LORD'S
 "LANGUAGE; and so strange and incredible
 "does the hypothesis of a pre-existent state
 "appear, that, *sooner than admit it*, I WOULD
 "SUPPOSE THE WHOLE VERSE TO BE AN INTER-
 "POLATION; or that THE OLD APOSTLE DICTA-
 "TED ONE THING, AND HIS AMANUENSIS WROTE
 "ANOTHER."* Nor is language of this kind
 confined to Dr. *Priestley*. He only copied it
 from his equally daring predecessors. *Faustus*
Socinus, treating of the doctrine of *Atonement*,

* *Letters to Dr. Price*, p. 57, 58.

speaks in the following bold and unequivocal manner: "For my part, though the doctrine
 "WERE stated, not ONCE MERELY, BUT OFTEN,
 "IN THE SACRED RECORDS, I would not, on that
 "account, BELIEVE IT."* Speaking of the
 doctrine of the incarnation of Christ, *Smalcius*,
 another distinguished foreign Unitarian, with
 equal explicitness, declares—"Although it
 "WERE AFFIRMED in Scripture, not once and
 "again, but VERY FREQUENTLY, and MOST EX-
 "PRESSLY, that God became man, we think it
 "much better, on account of the great absurdi-
 "ty of that doctrine, and its evident contradic-
 "tion to sound reason, and its blasphemy against
 "God, to imagine A CERTAIN MODE OF SPEAK-
 "ING, by which such things may be said con-
 "cerning God, than to understand the words in
 "their SIMPLE and LITERAL meaning."†

It seems, then, that if there HAD BEEN, not
 merely one, or a small number, but many hun-
 dreds of passages, in which the doctrines of the
 Trinity, and of the Divinity and Atonement of
 Jesus Christ, were taught in the most precise
 and unequivocal manner that could be conceiv-

* *Socini Opera. tom. II. p. 204.* † *Homil. VIII. ad cap. I. Joham.*

ed ; if all the powers of language and of logick had been laid under contribution to express these doctrines in the way least of all liable to doubt or misconstruction ; if we had been told often, that “ there are three Persons in the God-head, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and that these three are one, the same “ in substance, equal in power and glory ;” that Jesus Christ is very God, and very man in the same mysterious Person ; and that He died as the substitute of his people, to make atonement for their sins, and to bring in a vicarious righteousness for their justification before God ;—if we had been told all this ever so often, and ever so expressly, still it would have been all in vain, as to the establishment of these doctrines as true. It is pre-determined THAT THEY CANNOT POSSIBLY BE TRUE. Of course it would be IMPOSSIBLE to reveal them with such clearness of light, or explicitness of language, as to command belief.

Accordingly, the manner in which Unitarians have actually treated, and interpreted the scriptures, is a comment on the principles which they have avowed, as instructive as it is shocking.

A few specimens of this manner will be given, as proof that they do not shrink from the application of their own principles; and will abundantly suffice to show of what Unitarianism is capable. They are taken from the publications of some of the most respectable leaders of that sect in modern times; men most of whom American Unitarians continually quote, and recommend in the most respectful terms. .

The narrative in *Genesis*, respecting *Abraham's* offering up his son *Isaac*, is thus explained by *Eichhorn*, a Unitarian of Germany. "*Abraham* DREAMED that he must offer up *Isaac*, and, according to the SUPERSTITION of the times, regarded it as a divine admonition. He prepared to execute the command, which his dream had conveyed to him. A LUCKY ACCIDENT (probably the rustling of a ram entangled in the bushes) hindered it; and this ACCORDING TO ANCIENT IDIOM, was also the voice of the Divinity."*

The same writer gives it as his opinion, that *Moses'* account of the creation and fall of man,

* See Professor STUART's learned and able *Letters*, p. 144.

is merely a POETICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL SPECULATION of some ingenious person, on the origin of the world, and of evil. So that, whenever he meets with any circumstance in the narrative, not to be accounted for on natural principles, he removes all difficulty by ascribing it to poetick fiction.

In *Colossians* I. 16, &c. we find these words—*For by Him* (i. e. by Christ) *were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by Him, and for Him, and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.* Mr. *Belsham*, after a number of remarks intended to show, that *creation*, in this passage, has a very different meaning from that which we are accustomed to attach to the term, and that *all things* here spoken of, mean, not material or physical objects, but moral dispensations; he goes on to assert that the language of this passage is as applicable to a certain European monarch, then in his glory, as to *Jesus Christ*. The following are his words. “Of a certain person who now makes a very considerable figure in

"the world, it may be said with truth, so far as
 "the civil state of the continent of *Europe* is
 "concerned, that he is the creator of all these
 "new distinctions, high and low; whether
 "thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or
 "powers; all these things are made by him;
 "and for him, and he is before them all; takes
 "precedence, both in time and dignity, and by
 "him do all these things consist. Yet who
 "would infer from such language as this, that
 "the present ruler of *France* is a being of supe-
 "riour order to mankind, much less that he is
 "the maker of the world? THE LANGUAGE
 "WHICH IS TRUE OF BUONAPARTE, IN A CIVIL
 "VIEW, IS APPLICABLE TO JESUS CHRIST IN A
 "MORAL VIEW; but it no more implies pre-ex-
 "istence or proper creative power, in one case,
 "than in the other."* The view given of the
 same passage in the authorized Unitarian Ver-
 sion of the New Testament, is little, if any better.
 "The *creation* which the Apostle here ascribes
 "to Christ, expresses that *great change* which
 "was introduced into the *moral world*, and par-
 "ticularly into the relative situation of *Jews* and
 "*Gentiles*, by the *dispensation of the Gospel*.

* *Letters on Arianism*, p. 129. &c.

"This great change the Apostle here describes
 "under the symbol of a revolution introduced
 "by Christ among certain ranks and orders of
 "beings, by whom, ACCORDING TO THE JEWISH
 "DEMONOLOGY, BORROWED FROM THE ORIENTAL
 "PHILOSOPHY, the affairs of states and individuals were superintended and governed."*

Another Unitarian writer, of no small reputation, in commenting on I Cor. III. 11. *Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*; tells us that by *Jesus Christ* here is meant the DOCTRINE OF THE GOSPEL; that the most important part of the Gospel is the PRECEPTIVE part; and that, therefore, the meaning of the text is, THAT OBEDIENCE TO THE PRECEPTS OF THE GOSPEL IS THE ONLY SURE FOUNDATION OF HOPE FOR ETERNAL LIFE.†

Mr. Belsham, in his *Calm Inquiry*, p. 178, referring to our Saviour's declaration, *Matt. XVIII. 20, For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*, informs us that we are to understand

* Improved Version. LINDSEY'S *Sequel*. p. 477.

† Dr. HARWOOD on I Cor. III. 11.

our Lord as saying, "Such requests, dictated by my authority, and prompted by the spirit which I will communicate, will be as efficacious AS IF I MYSELF WERE PERSONALLY PRESENT." The same writer, (p. 179) remarking on *Matt. IX. 4.* and *Mark II. 8.*, says—"By these expressions, perhaps the historians, *Matthew* and *Mark*, might mean nothing more than that HE JUDGED FROM THEIR COUNTENANCES WHAT WAS PASSING in their hearts."

Dr. Priestley, commenting on *Ephesians I. 10.*, says—"To the phrase, *things in heaven, and things on earth*, it is possible that the Apostle MIGHT NOT ANNEX ANY DEFINITE IDEAS, intending only to express how very great and comprehensive, the scheme of the Gospel was. Or he might allude to that saying of our Saviour, *all power is given unto me in heaven and on earth*; by which we are to understand that all things, even divine interpositions, if necessary, WILL BE SUBSERVIENT to the spread of the Gospel."*

* Notes on all the Books of Scripture.

The passage in *Ephesians* III. 9. *Who created all things by Jesus Christ*, is thus explained by the same writer. "The Apostle alludes to
 "the NEW CREATION, or the RENOVATION OF
 "MEN, or of the world, BY THE GOSPEL, and
 "not the creation of the heavens and the earth;
 "a notion which I am confident would never
 "have come into the minds of any christians,
 "who had not previously learned something
 "like it in the principles of Platonism. In the
 "idea of the Apostles, the promulgation of the
 "Gospel made a new and great æra in the his-
 "tory of the world, from which things took, as
 "it were, a new commencement; and this he
 "figuratively calls a *new creation*, the great
 "agent in which was Jesus Christ."

In commenting on *Ephesians*, V. 2, where the Apostle says, *Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God*; the same distinguished Unitarian thus explains the passage—"Here Christ is repre-
 "sented in his death as a *sacrifice*; but IT IS
 "ONLY BY WAY OF FIGURE; AS ANY MAN DYING
 "IN A GOOD CAUSE, MAY BE SAID TO BE A SA-
 "CRIFICE TO IT. But did not *Peter* and *Paul*

suffer, and finally lay down their lives, in the same cause? Yet are they, any where in scripture, represented as A SACRIFICE for the sins of men? Or are we ever said to be SAVED by that sacrifice, or by the *shedding of their blood*? Truly such unhallowed trifling with the Saviour's character, and with the language of the Holy Spirit, fills me with horror!

In I *Peter* I. 12, it is written, *Which things the angels desire to look into.* This passage Unitarians must explain in accordance with their opinion, that there *are* no such spiritual beings as Angels at all. In the Improved Unitarian Version, therefore, the following comment upon it is found—"Perhaps the meaning of the "Apostle may be, that the messengers, (ministers) who are now employed to promulgate "this glorious doctrine, cannot fully comprehend "its import, and are desirous of improving their "acquaintance with it."

In the same Version, we find the following comment on I *Peter* III. 18. *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.* Christ

suffered for sin, not by bearing the "punishment
 "due to sin, but to INTRODUCE AND RATIFY A
 "DISPENSATION, BY WHICH THE IDOLATROUS
 "HEATHEN WOULD BE ADMITTED INTO COVE-
 "NANT WITH GOD."

In II *Peter* II. 4, these words occur—*For if
 God spared not the Angels that sinned, but cast
 them down to hell, &c.* How is this passage to
 be disposed of, in consistency with the Unitari-
 an doctrine, that there is no devil, and no good
 or bad angels? With perfect ease, as follows—
If God spared not the Angels that sinned, &c.
 "Or if God spared not the messengers who had
 "sinned, i. e. THE SPIES WHO WERE SENT TO
 "EXPLORE THE LAND OF CANAAN, &c." But
 "if the common interpretation be admitted, it
 "will not establish the popular doctrine concer-
 "ning fallen Angels; for 1. THE EPISTLE IT-
 "SELF IS OF DOUBTFUL AUTHORITY. 2. From
 "the change of style, THIS IS THE MOST
 "DOUBTFUL PORTION OF THE EPISTLE. 3. By
 "those who admit the genuineness of the Epis-
 "tle, this chapter is supposed to have been a
 "quotation from SOME ANCIENT APOCRYPHAL
 "BOOK; and the Apostle MIGHT NOT MEAN TO

"GIVE AUTHORITY TO THE DOCTRINE, but to
 "argue with his readers upon known and allow-
 "ed principles—&c."*

The explicit declaration of the Apostle, II
Peter III. 12, 13, is thus unceremoniously con-
 tradicted in the Improved Unitarian Version.
 "This, in a literal sense, IS IMPOSSIBLE, be-
 "cause THE HEAVENS ARE INCOMBUSTIBLE.
 "Nor is it REASONABLE to believe that an event
 "SO LITTLE COUNTENANCED BY NATURAL AP-
 "PEARANCES, as that of the destruction of the
 "earth by a general conflagration, is the subject
 "of a divine prediction. It is well known, that
 "in the language of prophecy, great political
 "changes and revolutions are foretold under the
 "symbol of terrible convulsions in the natural
 "world—The *heavens and the earth which are*
 "now, V. 7, must necessarily signify the Jew-
 "ish dispensation, or the then moral state of the
 "world, which must pass away to make room
 "for the promulgation of the christian religion.
 "But this revolution cannot take place without
 "producing great changes and convulsions in
 "the political world, which, in prophetick lan-

* Improved Version.

“guage, is expressed by the heavens being on
“fire, the elements melting, and the earth, with
“the works on it, being burned up.”

Once more ; the first two chapters of the Gospel according to St. *Matthew*, and the first two of the Gospel by St. *Luke*, are so explicit in asserting the miraculous conception of Christ, that they have always been considered by sober Christians as perfectly decisive against the Unitarian system. Unitarians, perceiving this, have generally agreed to EXPUNGE THE WHOLE OF THESE CHAPTERS FROM BOTH THE EVANGELISTS, except a few verses, which they suppose may be reconciled with their scheme. On what plea, do you suppose they take this liberty with the sacred text ? Not because the chapters in question are wanting in ANY of the *manuscript copies of the original* ; for they are confessedly found in ALL of them. Not because they are wanting in ANY of the early and most respectable *versions* ; for Unitarians do not deny that in all *these* also they are found. Not because they find the least authority from any early writer, for believing that those chapters made no part of the original Gospels. But they alledge, that the *Ebion-*

ites and *Marcion*, (who, as you have seen in the last Letter, were *hereticks* of the second century) excluded those chapters from the Gospel as used by them: and, *therefore*, as their successors in heresy, they think proper to expunge the same chapters now. But how shall we account for it that modern Unitarians, while they follow the *Ebionites* and *Marcion*, in their rejection of these passages from *Matthew* and *Luke*, do not go further, and imitate them in their still more serious mutilation of the sacred Oracles? The *Ebionites* rejected the three entire Gospels of *Mark*, *Luke* and *John*, and all the Epistles of *Paul*: and *Marcion* refused to receive as canonical any part of the *Old Testament*, or indeed any part of the *New*, which contained quotations from the Old. The only Gospel he received was that of *Luke*, and even from *that* he EXPUNGED WHATEVER HE DID NOT APPROVE.* If these ancient hereticks are to be followed as authority at all, why not fully? Is it that publick opinion would not allow, *at present*, of such bold and deep mutilation as *they* ventured upon; but that it was thought necessary to get rid, at least, of the troublesome passages in question, at all hazards?

* WARDLAW'S *Discourses*, p. 179, 181.

I have now endeavoured faithfully to lay before you, both text and comment on this subject: both the avowed Unitarian doctrine respecting the interpretation of the scriptures, and a fair exemplification of their doctrine, as drawn from their own expositors. I appeal to you, my Christian Friends, whether you can conceive of departures from every principle of fair construction more manifest and unwarrantable; of perversions more outrageous; and of invasions of the sacred text more bold, violent, and impious? If this mode of treating the Holy Scriptures be admissible, then I should say, there is an end of all confidence in the Bible, as a rule of faith: any thing may be proved from it, that a disordered imagination, or a depraved heart may happen to fancy. It would be as reasonable to appeal to revelation in arguing with a Deist, as in arguing with a Unitarian of this stamp. Nay, on this plan, the scriptures, instead of being *a light to the feet, and a lamp to the path*, of the humble inquirer, are rather fitted to bewilder, to darken counsel, and to lead astray.

The Orthodox do not, indeed, deny that the scriptures contain much figurative language;

may, that they abound in figure; that they employ very many expressions and representations, in condescension to human weakness; and many allusions, which can only be understood by comparing scripture with scripture, and all with the other works of God. Still they maintain, that the Bible is to be interpreted upon the same general principles with other books; that is, that the plain, simple, obvious sense, is to be adopted, unless the undoubted connection, or the still plainer and more unquestionable sense of other passages, forbids it. Thus when the Saviour says of himself—*I am the Door*; when the Apostle says of Him, that He is *a tried corner Stone*; and when it is said of our first parents, in the event of their falling from their primitive rectitude, *ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil*; and in another place, of mere men, *I have said ye are gods*; every one understands the expressions, in all these cases, to be figurative, and not to be construed literally. In like manner, when the inspired writers speak of the *right hand* of God, and of his *rising from his seat*, and *coming forth out of his place*, to manifest his power, no one supposes that Jehovah has bodily members, or that He is limited to any

place ; but the language is universally understood to be analogous to that which we all use, when we speak of the *arm*, or the *frown*, of civil government ; by which every one perceives to be meant, the exertion of the authority, or the expression of the disapprobation, of the individual or individuals who execute a nation's will.

So far, and to a similar extent in all analogous cases, the most sober Orthodox criticks go, in the interpretation of scripture. Such use of figurative language belongs to all ages and countries ; and is just as well understood, as when we speak of a *tide* of success, or a *gust* of passion, or the opening of a *door* of usefulness. Neither have the Orthodox any objection to that sober criticism of the sacred text, which leads to attempts at new and more exact translation, and to illustrations drawn from a comparison of manuscripts, and from the best ancient versions. All this they consider as perfectly fair, and as warranted, no less by the reverence which is due to Gods' word, than by the principles which are applied to the interpretation of all ancient books. But these legitimate rules of

interpretation, established at once by good sense, and by general practice, by no means, as you have seen, content Unitarian expositors. Every usage of language must be abandoned; every rule of grammar must be violated; the plain and universally received meaning of terms must be set aside; and passages, which in their simple and obvious sense, appear natural, and intelligible to the humblest capacity, must be forced, and perverted, in a manner which reverses all just principles of construction, and draws from the whole a meaning so remote, so cold, so vapid, and so far beneath what the language would seem naturally to import, that a serious inquirer is equally astonished and mortified at the result. How would this mode of interpretation be viewed, with respect to any other book? Would it not be deemed unfair and presumptuous in the highest degree? How much more exceptionable, then, when applied to that book which professes to be dictated by the Spirit of God, and which treats of subjects which, of all others, are most beyond the reach of our minds!

If the Bible contains a revelation from God to the mass of mankind, and is expressly intend-

ed to teach them the way of duty and happiness, we must suppose it adapted to the purpose for which it was given : that is, we must suppose it to be a plain book, suited to the common people, as well as to the learned and wise. The Gospel was originally *preached to the poor* ; and is fitted no less to nourish *babes in Christ*, than to support and invigorate *strong men*. The Bible, it is true, has depths which are beyond the ken of angels ; and portions of its contents by no means unfrequently occur, which require much various knowledge to enable any one to peruse them with intelligence and satisfaction. While there is more than enough in the scriptures, as there is in the great AUTHOR of them, to fill the most enlarged intellect, and to give scope and exercise to the most profound erudition ; yet it is equally certain, that the great body of those truths which relate to *our common salvation*, which hold forth to us *redemption through the blood of Christ*, even the *forgiveness of sins*, according to the *riches of his grace*, and which enforce the various duties of the christian life, are plain, and level to the most common capacity, disposed humbly to receive them. They are, indeed, so plain, that we are assured,

he who runs may read them ; and even the way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err therein. Such is the representation every where given on this subject, in the sacred volume itself. Nothing more is necessary, as we are assured, to enable a simple, unlettered man to read the word of God with intelligence and profit, than common sense, accompanied with an humble and teachable disposition. But if the Unitarian notions be correct, then the Bible is a sealed book : a book of all others least fitted for the common people ; and rather calculated to mislead than to instruct ; until some Unitarian expositor comes to open the seals ; and, by means of his various readings, his conjectural emendations, and his complicated criticism, to dispel the darkness which must otherwise rest upon it. Is this credible ? I must candidly declare, that if I believed it, I should be strongly inclined to concur with the Papists in withholding the scriptures from the laity, as unfit to be trusted in the hands of any but the initiated. Can such a view of the subject be tolerated by those who believe that *all scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable ; that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost ;*

and that *not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but that God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and foolish things to confound the wise, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence?*

Let me entreat you here, my Christian Brethren, to look back, for a moment, to the beginning of my fourth Letter, and then say, whether the passages of scripture, setting forth the Saviour's glory, and the work of redemption by him, there quoted, can possibly be considered, upon any established principles of interpreting metaphorical language, as importing any thing less than his Divinity and Atonement? I appeal to your candour, whether, if we construe those passages as Unitarians tell us we ought, there is a single fact or doctrine recorded in the Bible, which we can venture, with confidence, to interpret, as containing *literal truth*? Shall we not be constrained to admit, that the Resurrection of the body, is to be considered, not as a *literal*,

but as a *metaphorical* event? Where shall we draw the line, on *any subject*, between *reality*, and mere *figure of speech*?

Accordingly, while we notice the characteristic tendency of Unitarians to apply to the Bible the most forced and unnatural principles of interpretation, it is curious to observe what *portions* of scripture they are, to which these principles are most frequently and elaborately applied. They are precisely those portions which are most hostile to the Unitarian system. When the advocates of that system meet with passages which appear strongly to teach the Trinity of Persons in Jehovah; the Deity and Atonement of the Redeemer, and other allied doctrines; then it is that the mightiest efforts of their wonder-working management are put in requisition; then it is that the plainest terms lose their ordinary and direct meaning, and are made to speak something essentially different, if not opposite. Other parts of scripture are commonly left to speak their native, simple language; but these never. Has not this a most suspicious aspect? when persons are ready to interpret like other people those passages which

do not implicate their peculiar creed ; but immediately adopt the most singular and unwarrantable principles of exposition, when those which *do* implicate them, are in question ; can charity herself forbear to indulge suspicions of the most unpleasant kind ?

Further ; in marking the distinctive characters of the Orthodox and the Unitarians, as to their manner of studying the scriptures, I have also thought that I could, every where, perceive this difference :—With the Orthodox, the explaining and applying the word of God, is chiefly AN AFFAIR OF THE HEART. . They contend, indeed, as much as any professing christians, for the exercise of the understanding in the interpretation of scripture, and in every department of religion : and it is presumed that they go as far as any in giving proofs of this exercise. But still in the study of the scriptures, unless I am deceived, they are distinguished, above all others, by a spirit of affectionate devotion. The views which they take of Gospel truth, are peculiarly suited to humble, to soften, to interest the feelings in the highest degree, to engage and elevate the affections, and to inspire *joy and peace*

in believing. Accordingly, when the Orthodox, who are pious, read the Bible with a practical view, they, for the most part, wish to have the spirit of criticism dormant, and to lay open their minds to those heart-affecting, self-abasing, and purifying impressions, which are, at once, more delightful and more profitable than any other. When they read, that *the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin*; that *He bare our sins in his own body on the tree*; that *He is the propitiation for our sins*; and that *He gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity*—they delight to yield themselves to all the constraining influence of redeeming love, and to dwell with the liveliest wonder, gratitude, and joy, on the unparalleled scenes of the Garden and the Cross. They never enjoy themselves so well, in the perusal of the scriptures, as when, gazing on the unutterable wonders of the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God, the love of his Person becomes their ruling passion, and conformity to his example and will, the precious model of their lives.

But how different the spirit with which Unitarians approach and peruse the scriptures! With them the study of the sacred volume appears to be chiefly a COLD INTELLECTUAL EXERCISE. They take it up very much as they would take up a Latin or Greek classick; considering it, indeed, as treating of far more important subjects; but as proper to be examined with the same spirit of free, bold, and even sceptical scrutiny; as proper to be suspected, and questioned at every turn. Accordingly, they never seem to be so much at home in the Bible, as when estimating the comparative value of ancient manuscripts; discovering and expunging passages alleged to be spurious; and settling the niceties of verbal criticism. Their peculiar element seems to consist in persuading themselves and others NOT TO BELIEVE TOO MUCH; and in endeavouring to shew that the scriptures speak a language less serious, less affecting, and less solemn, than the Orthodox imagine. In short, their object seems to be attained, exactly in proportion to the degree in which they can divest the word of God of those truths and characteristicks which are peculiarly fitted to warm, to elevate, and to enrapture the

heart; in which they can reduce its contents to little more than a system of cold, heartless ethics. With them, the amazing scenes of *Gethsemane* and *Calvary*, are brought down to a level with the events of common history; and all those immeasurable glories and benefits of the Saviour, which are adapted to fix the heart, and to move the profoundest affections of the christian, are either wholly denied, or, with a frigid ingenuity, explained away.

Which of these systems, then, my Friends, ought the serious christian to countenance?—That which honours the Bible, as the inspired word of God; or that which virtually denies its inspiration, and places it on a level with mere human compositions?—That which bows to it, as the infallible rule of faith and practice, to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken; or that which establishes a higher tribunal than the scriptures, and maintains the lawfulness of adding to them, and expunging from them, at pleasure?—That which interprets the word of God in a simple, natural, analogical manner; or that which applies to it principles of exposition often the most forced

and unnatural that can be conceived ; principles which would be rejected with indignation if applied to any other book ?—In fine, that which recognizes in the sacred volume all those features of grandeur and glory, which are adapted to fill and warm the heart ; or that which would divest it of all those features, and hold up the inspired writers as continually using the most bold and high-sounding language, to express the most diminutive and common ideas ?—Which of these systems, I say, ought the serious christian to countenance ?—It is impossible to hesitate. The former is the humble, filial spirit of children sitting at the feet of the Saviour and learning of Him, as the great and all wise Prophet of his church ; the latter, is the GENUINE SPIRIT OF INFIDELITY, to which, under all its disguises, the christian ought to say, with his Master—*Get thee behind me, Satan ; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.*

LETTER VII.

Truth to be tried by its practical influence—Objections to Unitarianism on this ground—Unitarianism disposed to deny or conceal its principles—Indifferent to Truth—Hostile to the exercises of Vital Piety—Deficient in yielding support and consolation in Death—Unfriendly to the spirit of Missions—Every where more agreeable to Infidels, than any other system which bears the Christian name.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

THE principle, that truth must be tried by its MORAL INFLUENCE, is as old as truth itself. *By their fruits ye shall know them*, is a maxim of our Lord, which common sense, and every part of scripture, conspire to enforce. This is a test to which we ought to be willing to bring all our own opinions ; and by which every wise man will be careful to *try the spirits, whether they are of God*.

Whether Unitarianism can, advantageously, stand this test, is a question which I desire in this Letter candidly to examine. The considerations urged in the foregoing Letters against the Unitarian system, are, to my mind, perfectly conclusive. That system which finds no countenance in the word of God; which has been opposed by the pious in all ages; and the advocates of which have always been cast of the Church, and denied the name of Christian, surely has little claim to our respect or confidence. But I have some further objections to this system, which press upon my mind with irresistible force, and which compel me to believe that it is "not of God." These are objections drawn from the *practical influence* of Unitarianism, in a great variety of respects. This branch of the controversy between the Orthodox and Unitarians, has been treated, as many of you know, in a very able and satisfactory manner, by the Rev. Mr. *Fuller*, in a work to which I before referred, and which I would again recommend to your careful perusal. The points, however, to which I wish, at present, to call your attention, are such as that eminent Servant of Christ has either wholly omitted to notice, or has treated in a very cursory manner.

I. The *first* of the Objections which I propose to consider, is that Unitarians manifest, more remarkably than any other sect with which I am acquainted, A DISPOSITION TO DENY OR CONCEAL THEIR RELIGIOUS OPINIONS.

The sacred Scriptures solemnly enjoin upon us, not only to search diligently after the truth ; but also, having discovered it, to hold it fast ; to be ever ready to profess our belief of it, and *ever ready*, also, to give an answer to every one that asketh a reason of the hope that is in us. Nor can I conceive how the command, to *confess Christ before men*, or the duty of *not shunning to declare all the counsel of God*, can be duly regarded, especially by ministers of the Gospel, without a frank and habitual readiness to make known *the truth as it is in Jesus*, to all who ask to be instructed, or are willing to receive it. And I presume it will not be denied, that the Orthodox, in general, have not only manifested a disposition to attach much importance to doctrinal opinions ; but also no less of a disposition to embrace every suitable opportunity to communicate and preach them,

But, unless I am greatly deceived, the same cannot, with truth be said of Unitarians. On the contrary, I am persuaded, that, in all ages, since the first appearance of Unitarianism in the church of Christ, a disposition to practise the arts of concealment, denial, and evasion, whenever there was any considerable temptation to do so, has been one of its most remarkable characteristics.

More than sixteen hundred years ago, *Irenæus* made this complaint concerning certain Unitarians of his day. "In PUBLICK," says he, "they use ALLURING DISCOURSES, because of the common christians, as they call those who wear the christian name in general; and to entice them to come often, they pretend to PREACH LIKE US; and complain, that, although THEIR DOCTRINE BE THE SAME AS OURS, we abstain from their communion, and call them hereticks. When they have seduced any from the faith by their disputes, and made them willing to comply with them, they BEGIN TO OPEN THEIR MYSTERIES."*

* *Lib : III. cap. 15.*

In the case of *Paul of Samosata*, a distinguished Unitarian of the next century, a similar spirit was manifested. You were told, in a former Letter, that when charged with holding certain opinions which he had preached, he solemnly denied the charge; nay, denied it on OATH. Yet, in a little while, he preached the same doctrines again, and was again charged, and again found to deny and equivocate; until, at length, the most decisive measures became necessary to expose his true character, and to exclude him from the sacred office.

When *Arius*, the father of the Arians, arose, and began to propagate his opinions, he acted a similar part. Finding that these opinions gave offence, and were about to become matter of public scrutiny, he professed a willingness to receive the popular language concerning them, and wished to have it believed that he differed but little from the body of the church. Much time and ingenuity were employed by the Council which tried him, in attempting to drag him from his lurking places, and to extort from him an explanation of his views. Nor was their purpose accomplished at last without extreme

difficulty. Afterwards, indeed, when his followers, for a time, got the civil power into their own hands, they were ready enough to avow their principles, and to persecute the Orthodox, with far greater fury than ever they had been persecuted themselves.

It is worthy of notice, too, that the same general system of evasion and concealment, was adopted by both *Laelius*, and *Faustus Socinus*, in the sixteenth century. The former joined an Orthodox church, and remained in its communion while he lived, passing himself off as an Orthodox man, with the greater part of those with whom he conversed. Nor do his sentiments appear to have been fully disclosed but by his private papers after his decease. The latter, even after he had adopted his Uncle's opinions, and ventured, in a degree, to profess them, practised the most unworthy acts, if the best historians are to be believed, to conceal or to varnish over the most offensive features of his system, and to induce the belief that he differed much less from the Orthodox church than he really did.

Nor has it been otherwise in later times. Dr. *Priestley* declared, a few years ago, that there were GREAT NUMBERS of persons in the church of *England*, even among the *clergy*, who, while they *privately* held Unitarian opinions, did not scruple in *publick* to countenance "a mode of worship, which, if they were questioned about it, they would not deny to be, according to their own principles, idolatrous and blasphemous!" If *Newton* and *Locke* WERE Unitarians, they acted, as I have hinted in a former Letter, the same unworthy part. And, if I have not been misinformed, there is too much reason to believe that there are a few persons of a similar character, at this time, in the established church of *Scotland*.

The history of *American* Unitarianism most remarkably accords with these striking facts. The course of conduct pursued by the Unitarian clergy in *Massachusetts*, for a number of years, was perfectly in character for disciples of the distinguished hereticks already mentioned. Strong suspicions that they were friendly, if not devoted, to the Unitarian System, were entertained for a considerable time, before direct

proof of the fact could be fastened upon them. Charges to that amount were frequently made; but by most of them repelled, as unkind, and even slanderous. They appeared anxious to have it believed that they did not differ materially from the Orthodox around them. And it was not until a publication, made by one of their own friends, beyond the Atlantick, and republished and circulated in this country, had grievously offended them, but effectually disclosed their views, that any considerable number of them consented to take the name of Unitarians. And even now, if I mistake not, while they own the general name, they are, most of them, extremely reserved in communicating their opinions in detail; insomuch that, not only the publick at large, but some of their own people, are entirely uncertain what they believe concerning some of the fundamental doctrines of christianity.

May I not venture to say, too, that some of the Unitarians in your own neighbourhood, are, in some degree, chargeable with the same conduct? You have worshipping assemblies of almost every denomination of christians in your

City. Respecting the religious sentiments of the pastors and teachers of these different denominations, no one is at a loss. They have not only each publickly and solemnly subscribed a particular creed; but you can hardly go into their respective places of worship, without hearing their peculiar tenets openly and freely proclaimed. But how is it with your Unitarian neighbours? Have *they* ever told any one, fairly and fully, what they believe? I have attended to their publications, from time to time, when they happened to fall in my way, but have never been able to discover. I have perceived, indeed, that there are many truths, in my view all-important, which they do NOT believe. I have perceived, too, that they are very ZEALOUS in NOT BELIEVING, and are taking unwearied pains to persuade others to follow their example. But which of the various Unitarian systems, differing so widely from each other, they do embrace, I have no recollection of having ever seen or heard any thing that enabled me to decide. They speak of one writer, of that class, as having gone too far, and of another, as having expressed himself erroneously; yet, after all, they do not inform us whom they are

willing to regard as a model, or what scheme they actually adopt. Why all this reserve? Even if they consider the Orthodox around them, as I suppose they do, as *a crooked and perverse generation*, still, themselves being judges, ought they to be *ashamed of Christ and of his words before them?*

Nay, I have not only observed a striking *reserve* among Unitarians, as to the disclosure of their sentiments, which I was never able to reconcile with correct principles; but I have also observed, among many of them, another practice, still more evidently, as it appears to me, unfair and criminal. I refer to the practice complained of by Dr. *Wardlaw*, in his able reply to Mr. *Yates*, and often noticed by others, as indulged by Unitarian polemicks. When they feel pressed by a text or an argument which bears hard on the Socinian hypothesis, they take refuge in Arianism, and endeavour to maintain that the difficulty vanishes, on the plan of the pre-existence and superangelick nature of Christ, as held by Arians. On the contrary, when pressed by a passage of scripture, or a consideration, which wears an aspect unfavoura-

ble to Arianism, they can, with equal dexterity, avail themselves of the Socinian doctrine, and argue with the lowest Humanitarian. Is this change of armour and of colours, characteristick of the christian soldier, or of a warrior of a different stamp? Is it characteristick of the kingdom of light, or the kingdom of darkness?

I am far, indeed, from alledging that ALL Unitarians have been chargeable with pursuing this disingenuous conduct. In many cases, they have been under no *temptation* to conceal or equivocate; but every inducement was the other way. Such is now, probably, and has been for some time, the state of things in *Germany*. And even in situations in which the greatest odium was to be incurred in avowing Unitarian opinions, some truly honourable examples of candour and firmness have been exhibited. But my position is, and I believe most sincerely that it may be maintained—that, in all ages, from the time of *Ebion* to the present hour, where the mass of the surrounding population was Orthodox, Unitarians have manifested a disposition to conceal their sentiments, to equivocate, to evade, and even solemnly to deny

them, when questioned, and to disguise themselves under the garb of Orthodoxy, to a degree which no other sect calling itself Christian ever manifested.

To what, I ask, is this fact to be ascribed? I leave it with You, my Christian Brethren, to solve the question. I will only say, that I can think of no possible reason for it, but such as must stamp the character of deep corruption upon the Unitarian cause.

II. Another strong Objection to the Unitarian system, in my mind, is, THE TENDENCY WHICH IT EVERY WHERE MANIFESTS TO PRODUCE INDIFFERENCE TO TRUTH. This objection is closely connected with the preceding; but it deserves more distinct consideration.

The vital importance of TRUTH, and the duty of loving, seeking and maintaining it, are laid down in scripture with a degree of plainness and force, truly impressive. Great stress is laid on *receiving the truth in the love of it*; on being *established in the truth*; on *walking in the truth*; on being *sanctified through the truth*; and on

contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. We are solemnly warned against *believing every spirit* ; we are commanded to *try the spirits whether they are of God* ; to *prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.* And with the language of the Bible, the spirit of the pious has, in all ages, most strikingly agreed. This appeared eminently in the primitive church, in which truth seems to have been prized and defended with peculiar affection ; and all who opposed any of its essential portions, as you have seen in a former Letter, to have been excluded from the body of believers, as unworthy of the Christian name. The same thing is observable in the history of all the Witnesses for the truth, from the rise of the Papacy till the Reformation. That which distinguished them, was their earnestly contending for the essential articles of the christian faith, and separating themselves from all hereticks. For the same great truths, all the Reformers contended, both in their writings and preaching, and some of them laid down their lives. And perhaps there is no point concerning which the Orthodox of the present day, differ more remarkably from Unitarians, than in maintain-

ing the great importance of certain doctrines, and contending for them as fundamental. This is not denied by Unitarians themselves ; but is, on the contrary, continually brought forward by them, as matter of reproach against the Orthodox. With the charge, as such, I have nothing to do at present. My sole concern is with the acknowledged *fact*, as a fact that has been most remarkably connected with Orthodoxy in all ages. And I maintain that it is natural, reasonable, scriptural, and just such a fact as might be expected to result from the conviction, that there is an essential and eternal difference between truth and error, and that they can never coalesce.

Now my objection to Unitarianism is, that it is generally found connected with a spirit *directly the reverse of this* ; with a marked indifference to truth ; not only with a singular unwillingness to say much about the articles of its own creed in detail ; but also with quite as singular a disposition to underrate the importance of *any truth*, and to be on friendly terms with the advocates of ALL CREEDS, EXCEPT THE ORTHODOX.

To believe in THE INNOCENCE OF ERROR, and even of fundamental error, is what I call INTERFERENCE TO TRUTH. And if this be not one of the most striking features of Unitarianism, at any rate, of the Unitarianism which is most prevalent in our country, I am egregiously deceived. What would be admitted as proof of such a belief, before any enlightened and impartial tribunal? If persons calling themselves Unitarians differ essentially from each other, without any bar to constant religious intercourse: if some of them consider Christ as possessing a real, though derived Divinity; others as the most exalted of all creatures; and a third class, as a mere man: if some of them think he ought to be worshipped, and others that all worship directed to him is gross idolatry: if some of them believe that Christ really made, in some sense, atonement for sin, and that this atonement is the foundation of all christian hope; while others regard the doctrine of atonement, in any sense, as a mere corruption of christianity, which deserves nothing better than ridicule, or abhorrence: if these men, notwithstanding all these diversities of opinion, still call each other brethren of the same denomination; worship

and commune together without difficulty; mutually praise and recommend each other's books and preaching: more especially, if all these different parties profess to be ready to worship and hold communion with the Orthodox, while they, at the same time, acknowledge that they cannot help considering them as *blasphemers* and *idolaters*.—Would this be manifesting indifference to truth, or would it not? Surely the answer is not difficult.

Let us see, then, what are the facts. Dr. *Samuel Clarke*, was a high Arian, or Semi-Arian. He professed to believe in the Divinity of Christ, in a derived and qualified sense. Dr. *Price* was an Arian, of the common stamp, who taught that Christ was the most exalted of all creatures. *Socinus* made a still lower estimate of the character of the Saviour: he supposed him to have been a mere man, but miraculously conceived, and taken up into heaven, to be instructed in the divine will; and that, being endowed with special authority and dignity, he ought to be worshipped. Dr. *Priestley*, as you have seen, went lower still. He supposed that Christ was a mere man, born like other men, and

like other men fallible and peccable. With Dr. *Priestley*, Mr. *Belsham* substantially agrees. Mr. *Channing*, of *Boston*, is said to be an Arian; yet he says, that he considers it as "no crime to believe with Mr. *Belsham*;" that is, to consider Christ as a mere fallible and peccable man.* And Professor *Stuart*, of *Andover*, tells us that, if he is correctly informed, "there are scarcely any "of the younger preachers of Unitarian sentiments, in *New-England*, who are not simple *Humanitarians*;"† in other words, who do not in the main agree with Dr. *Priestley* and Mr. *Belsham*. Yet, when you come to hear Unitarians of these different classes speak of each other, it is in terms which indicate all that degree of harmony which is necessary to ecclesiastical communion. They claim each other as brethren. They make a common cause when attacked. They recommend each other's writings; not, indeed, always, with an explicit declaration that they approve of *every thing* in them; but in a way which an Orthodox man would be shocked at doing, concerning any books of which he did not, in substance, ap-

* See his *Letter to Mr. Thacher*.

† *Letters to Mr. Channing*. p. 152.

prove. When the lowest *Humanitarian* attempts to make a list of those distinguished men from whose character he hopes to derive countenance, he confidently quotes Arians and even Semi-Arians as ON HIS SIDE. And when the highest Semi-Arian makes out a corresponding list, he quotes, without scruple, the most lax Priestleyan, or Belshamite, as his UNITARIAN BROTHER! Can men who act thus, reasonably complain, if a discerning publick consider them as ALL ALIKE, and as having no attachment whatever to truth?

But, what crowns all, as a specimen of Unitarian indifference to truth, is the following declaration from Dr. Price, who was just mentioned as ranking with the Arians. "Give me but the fact, that Christ is *the resurrection and the life*, and explain it as you will. Give me but this single truth, that *eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour*, and I shall be PERFECTLY EASY with respect to the contrary opinions which are entertained about THE DIGNITY OF CHRIST; ABOUT HIS NATURE, PERSON, AND OFFICES, and the manner in which he saves us. Call

“him, if you please, simply A MAN, endowed
“with extraordinary powers; or call him A SU-
“PERANGELICK BEING, who appeared in hu-
“man nature for the purpose of accomplishing
“our salvation; or say, (if you can admit a
“thought so shockingly absurd) that it was the
“second of three co-equal persons in the God-
“head, forming one person with a human soul,
“that came down from heaven, and suffered
“and died on the cross:—Say, that he saves us
“merely by being a messenger from God. to
“reveal to us eternal life, and to confer it upon
“us; or say, on the contrary, that he not only
“reveals to us eternal life, and confers it upon
“us, but has *obtained* it for us, by offering him-
“self a propitiatory sacrifice on the cross, and
“making satisfaction to the justice of the Deity
“for our Sins: I SHALL THINK SUCH DIFFER-
“ENCES OF LITTLE MOMENT, provided the fact
“is allowed, that Christ *did* rise from the dead,
“and will raise us from the dead, and that all
“righteous penitents will, through God’s grace
“in him, be accepted and made happy forev-
“er.”—In the opinion of this distinguished Uni-
tarian, then, it is a question of VERY LITTLE MO-
MENT,—not worth contending about,—whether

Christ be a Divine Person, or a mere man; whether the worship of Christ, be a christian duty, or gross idolatry; whether his atonement be the grand foundation of hope, or a corrupt human invention. In his opinion, all who call themselves Christians, may worship and commune together with perfect concord and affection, although they may regard each other, at the time, as blasphemers, polytheists, and idolaters! If this be not indifference to truth, I know not what deserves the name. If this be the counsel of Unitarians, I must say, *O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united!*

Dr. *Priestley*, with his usual frankness, confesses that many Unitarians *have* this characteristic indifference to truth, and attempts to account for it. And, whatever may be thought of the private opinions of this eminent man; yet his testimony, as a witness, respecting the principles and character of Unitarians, will surely be considered as unexceptionable. He speaks thus: "Though Unitarian dissenters are not apt to entertain any doubt of the truth of their principles, they do not LAY SO MUCH STRESS

“UPON THEM, as other christians do upon theirs.
“Nor, indeed, is there any reason why they
“SHOULD, when they do not consider the hold-
“ing of them to be at all *necessary to salvation*,
“which other christians often do with respect
“to theirs. Besides, it cannot be denied that
“many of those who JUDGE SO TRULY concern-
“ing particular tenets in religion, have attained
“to that cool, unbiassed temper of mind, in con-
“sequence of becoming more indifferent to re-
“ligion in general, and to all the modes and
“doctrines of it. Though, therefore, they are in
“a more favourable situation for distinguishing
“between truth and falsehood, they are not
“likely to acquire a zeal for what they conceive
“to be truth.”* The Author does not, indeed,
apply this representation to all Unitarians, but
only to a particular class of them; but he un-
doubtedly, at the same time, intimates that
persons of that denomination, generally, attach
much less importance to religious truth than
most other professing christians; and that there
are solid reasons why, upon their principles,
they *should* do so. This is sufficient for my
purpose.

* *Discourses on Various Subjects*, p. 95. 96.

III. Another most serious Objection which I have to the Unitarian system, is, that IT IS TOTALLY AND IRRECONCILEABLY HOSTILE TO THE EXERCISES OF VITAL AND EXPERIMENTAL PIETY.

I need not inform You, my Brethren, that the religion of Jesus Christ, as a practical system, is a religion of redeemed, recovered sinners; and that there are certain feelings and views, which the Orthodox suppose invariably to mark the return of a convinced and repenting rebel to his reconciled God, and his subsequent life of holy obedience. We do not pretend to say, that these feelings and views are the same in all cases, or to lay down rules by which they are to be formally regulated, in any case. But we believe that there are certain general principles, which are, in substance, realized in every instance of genuine repentance, and of christian walk with God. We suppose, that, in every such instance, there is an impression of the glory of God, and the purity of his law, never experienced before; a deep, heartfelt conviction of the exceeding evil and ill-desert of sin; a cordial hatred of it; a sincere mourning over it; and a hearty turning from it unto God, with

“full purpose of, and endeavours after, new obedience;” an affectionate “receiving and resting on the Lord Jesus alone for salvation, as He is freely offered in the Gospel;” an habitual looking to Him, as the foundation of hope, and the life of the soul; a constant disposition to glory in his cross; a deep sense of obligation to Him for justifying righteousness, for sanctifying grace, and for daily strength; a hearty renunciation of all confidence in the flesh; unfeigned self abasement before God; daily self reproaches on account of daily short comings, and corruptions; sincere endeavours to *crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts*, and to shun the very appearance of evil; a sense of dependence, and a love of dependence, on free and rich grace; a governing desire to glorify Christ *in body and spirit which are his*; rejoicing in hope of his glory; and sometimes *rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory*.—Such are the exercises which the Orthodox consider as essential, in a greater or less degree, to all true religion; which they believe to be found strongly portrayed in the Bible, as constituting the essence of christian character; and which they are persuaded will ever meet a response of deep

and delightful interest in the bosom of every one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

But, I ask, is Unitarianism friendly to these exercises, as a system of experimental piety? Is it *consistent* with them? Is it not directly *hostile* to them? Nay, do not the great body of Unitarians *ridicule* these exercises as fanatical and delusive? In fact, are not their views of human nature, of the Saviour's character, and of the ground of hope toward God, utterly irreconcilable with such views and feelings as have been described, and which hold so conspicuous a place among the pious breathings of scripture saints? I have never known exercises of this character treated by any persons of the Unitarian denomination, otherwise than with frigid indifference, or repelling contempt. And I can, with equal sincerity declare, that I have never known an instance of a Unitarian, who appeared to be led on through the stages of seriousness, anxiety, and deep conviction of sin, to a cordial acceptance of the offers of salvation through a Redeemer, who did not, in the course of these exercises, solemnly renounce the Unitarian system, as one which afforded no adequate hope to

the soul, and which would by no means stand the test of either scripture or experience.

I suppose, indeed, that no Unitarian living, would think it any compliment to have either the belief or the experience of such exercises as I have referred to above, ascribed to him. Dr. *Priestley* speaks of them in a manner expressive of both *contempt* and *horror*.* Mr. *Belsham* denounces every thing of this kind, so frequently and uncereemoniously, that proof of his opinion on the subject is not necessary. Indeed he goes so far as to speak of ARDENT LOVE TO CHRIST as an UNREASONABLE FEELING, and as one which deserves to be considered as a mere ILLUSIVE IMAGINATION. Can we, then, my Friends, with the sacred volume in our hands, and, I trust I may add, with the personal experience of many of us, deeply impressed upon our hearts;—can we regard with any other feelings than those of abhorrence, a scheme which openly turns into ridicule those conflicts, consolations and joys, which have been for ages consecrated in the experience of the truly pious, and without which, in some degree, we conscientiously believe, *no man shall see the Lord?*

* *Memoirs of himself*, p. 7.

IV. A fourth Objection to the Unitarian system which deeply impresses my mind, is, that I NO WHERE FIND THAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES TO ITS CONSOLATION IN A DYING HOUR, which IN ALL AGES HAVE BEEN FURNISHED BY THE ORTHODOX SYSTEM.

Those principles which are found most effectually to support and elevate the mind, in that trying season, when "heart and flesh fail," and when all the realities of eternity are opening on the soul, have certainly a strong presumptive claim to our confidence. In that honest hour, when the world is withdrawing, when the solicitations of appetite and passion are silent, and when the judgment seat is in view, many a principle which once appeared firm and tenable, has most ignobly and miserably failed its possessor, and left him without a prop. It behoves every one of us, therefore, in the day of our health, to ask ourselves, without partiality, and without evasion, how far the hopes which we cherish will be likely to stand this solemn, this inevitable test.

Now, I can aver, with unwavering confidence, that I have NEVER KNOWN THE SYSTEM OF THE ORTHODOX TO FAIL ANY ONE, in that interesting hour which tries the hopes of men. That is, I have never known any one who had cordially embraced the system of *redemption through the blood of Christ*; who had built all his confidence on the atoning sacrifice and perfect righteousness of a Divine Redeemer; and who had long cherished the hope that he should finally receive eternal life, as the purchase of the Saviour's blood, and the gift of his hands:—I have never known SUCH a man, when he came to die, fearful that this ground was not firm enough to support him, and disposed to abandon it for something which promised to be more adequate to his wants. I have known some such, indeed, fearful lest they might have deceived themselves as to their own personal character; lest they might not have been really building on the Saviour, but on something else. In short, of the great Foundation of their hope itself, they had no apprehension, but only whether they were resting upon it. But never did I see or hear of a man who, in those trying circumstances, began to think that he had made

too high an estimate of Christ, or who regretted that he had relied upon Him so much, or laid so much stress upon his atonement and his righteousness. On the contrary, no one, I will venture to say, ever knew a votary of Orthodoxy who did not meet death with joy and triumph, just in proportion to the degree in which he was assured, that he was really and practically a believer in Christ. And O, how often have I seen such leave the world in the most joyful and triumphant manner! How often have I heard them, with the smile of assured hope, and sometimes with the rapture of anticipated glory, marked on their dying features, exclaim—*I am not ashamed, for I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God, who giveth me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ!* And close the scene, by crying out, with their expiring breath, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit!*

Can the same be said with truth of Unitarians and their system? It, most assuredly, can-

not. I have known many, very many, who felt confident and satisfied with that system in the days of their health; but who, when death approached, renounced it, as affording to the soul no foundation of hope. Then, when they took a retrospect of all the sins and short-comings of their lives, they began to see that, without a better righteousness than their own, they could never appear before a holy God in peace. They have, accordingly, abandoned,—wholly abandoned, their old ground; and felt constrained to fall at the feet of Immanuel, and to exclaim, humbled and adoring, with *Thomas*, MY LORD, AND MY GOD! And, even among those who did not thus renounce their old creed, but died fondly cleaving to it; the utmost that I have ever heard of, as manifested by them, on the approach of death, was a certain *philosophick calmness*. This, it is but justice to say, was remarkably displayed in the death of Dr. *Priestley* himself. But his calmness, according to his biographer, was not only *connected with* a belief in the doctrine of UNIVERSAL SALVATION, but FOUNDED upon it. “He desired me,” says his Son (this was a few hours before he expired) “He desired me to reach him a pamphlet which

"was at his bed's head, '*Simpson on the Dura-*
 "tion of future Punishment.' It will be a source
 "of satisfaction to you to read that pamphlet,
 "said he, giving it to me. It contains MY SEN-
 "TIMENTS ; and a belief in them will be A SUP-
 "PORT TO YOU, in the most trying circumstan-
 "ces, AS IT HAS BEEN TO ME. We shall ALL
 "MEET FINALLY. We only require different
 "degrees of discipline, suited to our tempers, to
 "prepare us for final happiness."* But who
 ever witnessed, in a Unitarian, such a death as
 that of *Stephen*, or such as that which *Paul* des-
 cribes, as exhibited by the triumphant believer?
 I believe it may with confidence be asserted,
 that such a sight was NEVER WITNESSED. In-
 deed a great part of the language concerning the
 Lord Jesus Christ, which the inspired writers
 put into the mouths of dying christians, or of
 christians approaching the end of their pilgri-
 mage ; and which the pious, in all ages, have
 delighted to adopt and to utter, on the confines
 of eternity, could not possibly, in my opinion, be
 uttered by a Unitarian, without, either assuming
 a new vocabulary, or entirely changing his prin-
 ciples.

* *Memoirs of Dr. Priestley*, Vol. I. 217.

Need I say, my Friends, that this is a consideration which ought deeply to impress the heart of every one who expects to die, and who desires to embrace such principles, and take such ground, as will stand the test of a dying hour? It is far from my wish to make any unfair appeal to the passions of men. I know that the artful and designing have sometimes made such appeals on behalf of the grossest error. But is not this one of the subjects, on which the *heart*, and the *feelings* OUGHT to be solemnly consulted? O that I could persuade every one who is about to decide between that blessed foundation of hope which the Bible exhibits, and that which Unitarians recommend, to place before him the solemnities of a dying bed; the rupture of those ties which bound him to a retiring world; the end of all human illusions; and the approach of a decisive reckoning, and a dread eternity! *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!*

V. I object to the Unitarian system as being, in my opinion, DECISIVELY AND NECESSARILY UNFRIENDLY TO THE SPIRIT OF MISSIONS.

By the Spirit of Missions, I mean an enlightened, ardent, and persevering zeal for the spread of the Gospel among those who have it not. I think I am not deceived when I say, that such a spirit has remarkably characterized the Orthodox in all ages, and just in proportion as their system was pure and predominant. Their expenditures and labours to promote this great object; their holy courage, self denial, sufferings, perseverance, and occasional sacrifices of life, in the precious cause, are on record. We have seen them devoting their time, and talents, and strength, and property, to the preaching of the Gospel among the poor and destitute. We have seen them going with the light of life, to dreary frontier settlements, to benighted pagans, and to the ignorant and depressed children of *Africa*. We have seen them contriving and exerting themselves to send christian instruction, in almost every variety of form, to the labourers in mines and manufactories; to the hut of the beggar; to the wigwam of the savage; to the cells of hospitals; and to the prisoner's dungeon. Nor is this to be wondered at. It is precisely what might be expected of those who love the Lord Jesus Christ supremely; who have expe-

rienced in their own souls the sweetness of his gracious consolations; who firmly believe that *there is salvation in no other*; and who are deeply convinced that the situation of those who are strangers to the grace of Christ must be deplorable in time and eternity.

I do not assert, indeed, that the Orthodox have been always equally awake to the importance of this object, or equally zealous in pursuing it; far less that they have ever done all that became them, in this or any other department of christian duty. But I do conscientiously believe that THE WHOLE of the substantial, faithful missionary work that has ever been done in our world, has been done by the Orthodox, as distinguished from Unitarians; and that the latter have manifested a most marked and characteristick deficiency in the Missionary Spirit. Have Unitarians ever fitted out a mission to the heathen? I have never heard of it. They have often had, at different periods, in the course of their history, great wealth, talents, and enterprize, at their command. But have any of these ever been, in good earnest, employed in imparting a knowledge of christianity to

the poor, the ignorant, the depressed, and the friendless? They have, indeed, it must be confessed, in former times, made great exertions, and incurred large expenditures, for propagating their opinions; and they are still doing the same. But in what manner? By going out, as other denominations have done, *into the highways and hedges*, and endeavouring to bring in to the gospel feast, *the maimed, the lame, the halt, and the blind*? Have they directed their exertions to the children of want and sorrow, and made the chosen objects of their evangelical labours *those who had none to help them*? No; they have always been remarkable for sending their missionaries and their books, to the most polished and populous places; to the upper classes of society; to the rich and literary; to those who already enjoyed the Gospel, and stood in no need of their instruction. So it has ever been, with so little exception, as not to impair, in the least degree, the force of the general assertion; and so it continues to be to the present hour.

And, indeed, with the prevalent Unitarian belief, could it be expected to be otherwise? Surely those who believe that all men will final-

ly be saved ; and, of course, that no particular faith or religious system, is necessary to salvation ; those who deny the original corruption of human nature, and do not, consequently, consider the heathen, or any other class of men, as in such deplorable circumstances as the Orthodox believe them to be ; and those who, systematically, discard the constraining influence of that supreme love, and deep sense of obligation, to Christ, which prompt the Orthodox to exert themselves in extending the kingdom of an atoning and redeeming Deliverer ;—those who embrace these opinions, cannot reasonably be expected to feel that desire for the spread of the Gospel, and the conversion of souls, which the Orthodox feel themselves bound every hour to cherish.

This representation is confirmed by Mr. *Robinson*, an English Unitarian, of great talents, and of extensive information. “It is remarkable,” says he, “that Socinianism has never been in fashion with the illiterate ; for in regard to the Polish churches, the ministers, and the far greater part of the members, were either noblemen, or eminent scholars, or both.” Again ; “It is remarkable that So-

"cinians seldom address their peculiar senti-
 "ments to the populace, but generally to gen-
 "tlemen of eminent learning and abilities.
 "Though this is inconsistent with that profes-
 "sion of the simplicity of revelation, which they
 "so commonly treat of in all their accounts of
 "the Gospel, as it was written by the Evange-
 "lists; yet it is perfectly agreeable to that
 "*philosophical, scientifick* mode of expounding it,
 "which they have thought proper to adopt, and
 "which will probably always put it out of the
 "power of man to render Socinianism popu-
 "lar."*

Are these FACTS? Then there is assuredly
 something false and rotten in the system to
 which they belong. That mode of interpreting
 and exhibiting the religion of Jesus Christ
 which cannot be adapted to the capacities of the
 poor, the ignorant, and, in general, to the low-
 est classes of society; that system, calling itself
 Christianity, which is ever found to flourish
 most among the rich, the splendid, and the lux-
 urious; and to languish when attempted to be
 propagated in the humbler walks of life: that

* *Ecclesiastical Researches*, p. 604, 605, 623.

system which, indeed, none but the ranks in some degree literary, can understand or relish : that system, in fine, which takes away ALMOST THE WHOLE of the MOTIVES which the Orthodox feel for endeavouring to send the glad tidings of salvation to the ends of the earth—cannot, I will venture to say, be the system which is found in the Gospel of the grace of God. It cannot be the system which our blessed Lord described, when, in the synagogue at *Nazareth*, He applied these words of the Prophet to himself—*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor ; He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised : or, when, in answer to the inquiry of John's disciples, who He was, He said—Go, and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see ; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk ; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear ; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them.*

VI. One more insurmountable Objection to the Unitarian system with me, is, that INFIDELS

EVERY WHERE PREFER THIS SYSTEM TO ANY OTHER THAT BEARS THE CHRISTIAN NAME, and feel no reluctance to uniting in worship with its adherents.

It is not an uncommon thing for Unitarians to boast, that avowed Deists, on hearing, or reading the discourses of their distinguished preachers, have greatly admired them ; and declared, that if the system exhibited in them were Christianity, they had no longer any difficulty in taking the name of Christian. I have been credibly informed of repeated instances of this kind in reference to the Rev. Mr. *Channing's* sermon, preached and published in *Baltimore*. Unitarians consider this fact as a most potent argument in favour of their creed ; as an argument, that it is so rational, and so strongly commends itself to common sense, that even infidels bow to its authority. But is it not a much more direct and powerful proof of something very different ; viz. that Unitarianism and Infidelity are so closely allied, that he who embraces the one, has really no good reason for objecting to the other ? This, I have no doubt, is the real ground of the fact in question. And, indeed, how can

it be otherwise? The prevalent system of Unitarianism at the present day, not only makes Christ a mere man, and discards the whole doctrine of Redemption; but also, as you have seen, rejects the inspiration of the scriptures; and, in short, presents a system reduced so nearly to a level with the Deistical scheme, and allows so much latitude of belief and of feeling, with regard to what is left, that the Deist must be fastidious indeed, who would feel much repugnance to joining in communion with a Unitarian society. Dr. *Priestley* seems to have been very much of this opinion; for, in writing to a Unitarian friend, concerning a gentleman who had been commonly reputed a Deist, he observes—“He is generally considered as an unbeliever: “IF SO, HOWEVER, HE CANNOT BE FAR FROM “US; and I hope in the way to be not only almost but altogether what we are.”* Mr. *Belsham*, according to a representation given in a former Letter, explicitly acknowledges, that Unitarianism does not differ, in any important point, from serious Deism; and, in another

* See *History of American Unitarianism*.

place, does not hesitate to avow, that he would much rather embrace Deism than Orthodoxy.*

So Infidels themselves view the matter. They have little objection to the prevalent forms of Unitarianism; not because they are willing to approximate to real christianity; but because they see something, under the name of christianity, NEARLY APPROACHING TO THEM. The Editors of the French *Encyclopedie*, under the article *Geneva*, express themselves thus—
 “Many ministers of *Geneva* have no other religion than complete Socinianism, rejecting all they call *mystery*, and supposing it to be the first principle of true religion to propose nothing for belief contrary to reason. Thus, when we press them on the necessity of Revelation, a position so essential to christianity, many of them substitute in its place *utility*, which appears to them a softer term. In this, if they are not orthodox, they are at least consistent. At *Geneva*, there is less complaint made than elsewhere of the progress of infidelity; which ought to excite no surprise: religion is there reduced almost entirely to the

* *Review of Wilberforce.*

“worship of one God, at least with all above
 “the lowest ranks. Respect for Jesus Christ,
 “and the Scriptures, is, perhaps, the only thing
 “which distinguishes the christianity of *Geneva*
 “from pure Deism.”

Again; under the article *Unitarians*, they speak as follows—“The Unitarians have always been regarded as christian divines who had only broken and torn off a few branches of the tree, but who still held to the trunk: whereas they ought to have been considered as a sect of philosophers, who, not willing to give too violent a shock to the worship and opinions, true or false, which were then received, did not choose openly to avow pure Deism, and reject formally, and without reserve, every kind of revelation; but who were continually doing with respect to the Old and New Testament, what *Epicurus* did with respect to the gods; ADMITTING THEM VERBALLY, but DESTROYING THEM REALLY. In fact, the Unitarians received only those parts of scripture which they found conformable to the natural dictates of reason, and which served to support and confirm the systems which they had embraced. A man becomes a

“Protestant. Soon perceiving the inconsistency of the principles which characterize Protestantism, he applies to Socinianism for a solution of his doubts and difficulties; and he becomes a Socinian. From Socinianism to Deism there is but an imperceptible shade, and a single step to take—and he takes it.”

In coincidence with this representation, it cannot be denied, that the *transitions* from Unitarianism to open infidelity;—the instances in which the *single, short step*, just referred to, has been taken, have been numerous in *Great Britain*, and in the *United States*, as well as on the continent of *Europe*. Nay, instances have not been wanting of their students of theology, and even their ministers, becoming avowed Deists, and even Atheists. The history of the Academy at *Hackney*, in *England*, presents a striking number of very instructive memorials on this subject. Mr. *Belsham* himself does not deny it. “This fact,” says he, “to a certain extent, cannot be denied; and most surely it excited unpleasant sensations in many, and not least in the minds of those whose endeavours to

“form them to usefulness in the church, were
“thus painfully disappointed.”

Nor is a fact, the counterpart of that which I have just stated, less striking. It is the fact that Deists are peculiarly apt to unite in plans and worship with Unitarians. Accordingly, it is, I believe, notorious, that, in all those places, in our Middle and Southern States, in which Unitarian congregations have been organized; within a few years past, a number of Deists have joined them, and become attendants on their worship; and that without any change of opinion. They have alledged, that, in such places of public worship, they seldom or never heard any thing that wounded their feelings, or interfered with their principles, and that they were fond of the good moral lectures which they commonly heard from the preachers. They have remarked, indeed, that a few of the clergymen who ministered to these congregations, (as for example, now and then an Arian who came along) were a little more serious, and disposed to make rather more of the Scriptures, and of Christ, than the other Unitarian preachers were wont to do; and this they could wish

were otherwise. But, then, they have remarked, at the same time, that, as the highest Arians, and the lowest Socinians, appeared to regard each other with entire complacency, and evidently made a common cause; and as the most serious of them were infinitely less revolting than the Orthodox, they have, in general, felt very comfortably at home among them. Some who attend at Unitarian places of worship, upon principles, and with feelings of this kind, I personally know; of others I have heard, and have no doubt they are numerous.

But I must bring this long Letter to a close. If the foregoing objections be well founded; if Unitarianism be averse to a candid avowal of its own principles; if it be chargeable with a characteristick indifference to truth; if it be hostile to the exercises of vital piety; if it strikingly fail of yielding support and consolation in death; if it be peculiarly deficient with respect to the spirit of missions; and, finally, if it be nearly allied to Deism, and be universally preferred by Deists, to any other system which bears the christian name;—need we further testimony that it is not the religion of Jesus Christ, but ANOTHER GOSPEL?

LETTER VIII.

Objections likely to be made by Unitarians to the foregoing statements—Answer—Advice with respect to the proper manner of treating Unitarians—Reasons in support of that advice—Concluding Remarks and Counsels.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

I HAVE endeavoured, in the foregoing pages, to the best of my knowledge and understanding, to set before you a portrait of Unitarianism as it really is. I can sincerely say, that I have not, intentionally, distorted or magnified a single feature. . My aim has been to inform you, not merely what the adherents of this system say of themselves ; but also what the *pious* have said of them, in all ages ; and, further, what consequences, both in regard to doctrine and practice, appear to me naturally, and indeed

necessarily, to flow from their fundamental principles. And the whole has been done with the sole view of assisting you in forming a judgment, how they and their principles ought to be regarded by Christians.

It is probable that many Unitarians will tell you, that the picture I have drawn is not a correct likeness ; that the representation given of their opinions, is altogether erroneous. And I have no doubt that *some* who go under the general name of Unitarians, may with truth say, that they abhor some of the sentiments which I have set down as parts of Unitarianism. But what would such persons wish us to do ? Here are embattled hosts, drawing near the camp of our Master and King, and manifesting every disposition to destroy both Him and us. They send us word, that they are willing to be at peace with us, on condition that we suffer them to come into our camp, and to vilify and stab our beloved Lord at pleasure. And when we decline to receive them as friends on these terms, they complain of us, as narrow-minded and unsocial, and even bitter and malignant. Some of this hostile army, are particularly loud

in their complaints of the injustice of our refusal. "Why," say they, "will you refuse to admit us into your camp, since *we* by no means carry our enmity to you and your king, so far as the great mass of our associates. We exceedingly disapprove of a great deal that they have said and done. Why, therefore, should *we* be treated as if we resembled them? Surely this is not equitable." Our reply is, doubtless, anticipated—"We cannot receive you, or treat you otherwise than we do your associates in arms. You confess that, although not so intensely hostile as *they* are, you are still enemies to the dignity and kingdom of our Master. This is enough for us. We have no wish to receive known and avowed foes into our camp. But if we *were* willing to take persons of your character by the hand, still we could not consistently do it, as long as you remain connected with the worst of our opposers. You say, you entirely disapprove of much that they have said and done; but still you take their name; you follow their leader; you fight in their ranks; you aid and abet them in all that they do; nay, you are not willing to be friends with us, unless

"we will consent to take them to our friendship
"with you. We will receive neither. We must
"treat you all alike. As to all practical results,
"you are equally guilty with them."

Where is the injustice of this answer? It applies, most exactly, to the case before us. Although there may be some in the Unitarian camp in the *United States*, who are by no means prepared to degrade the character of the Saviour to mere fallible and peccable humanity; and who are far from wholly denying, either his Atonement, or the inspiration of his Word; yet as long as they countenance, assist, and defend those who *do* go the whole length of all this; and as this is evidently understood to be the predominant system of Unitarianism in our country, there can be no injustice in pursuing the course which I have done. It is against the system AS IT PREVALENTLY EXISTS, that we wish to warn christians; and especially as we believe that even the more softened and plausible forms of the general scheme, have, in reality the *same spirit*, and are leading to the same issue.

It is not improbable that some Unitarians may further object, that I have not, after stating each testimony or argument, in the foregoing pages, annexed the Unitarian reply; so that my readers might be able to weigh what is alleged on both sides. I answer, the volume is larger than I intended, as it is; but if I had done this, it must have swelled to twice or thrice its present size. Besides, is this demand reasonable? Do our opponents act upon it themselves? Do no Unitarians allow themselves to state and enforce their own interpretations of scripture, and their own arguments, without stopping after each, to exhibit all, or the substance of all, that learned and able Trinitarians, have said against them? They will not pretend that they do this. I can, however, assure you, my Christian Friends, that, in each case, as far as was in my power, I have carefully weighed what Unitarians are accustomed to say in reply to my testimonies and arguments; and have offered none, but what appeared to me to remain in full force, after all they have urged.

You are now, I trust, prepared, without hesitation, to answer the questions which were ask-

ed toward the close of the first Letter;—viz—
What estimate you ought to form of the *opinions*
of Unitarians? How you ought to treat their
persons? How to consider their *preaching*? How
to act with respect to their *publications*? Whether
you ought to regard them as *Christians* at
all? Whether their *congregations* ought to be
called churches of Christ? And whether the
ordinances which they administer ought to be
sustained as valid? You are prepared, I hope,
to decide, promptly and without wavering, that
they are BY NO MEANS TO BE CONSIDERED AS
CHRISTIANS, in any scriptural sense of the
word; that their preaching is to be avoided as
blasphemy; their publications to be abhorred
as pestiferous; their ordinances to be held un-
worthy of regard as christian institutions; and
their persons to be in all respects treated as DE-
CENT AND SOBER DEISTS IN DISGUISE. Such is
the estimate which I feel constrained to form for
myself; and, of course, that which I wish to im-
press upon your minds. And, if I do not de-
ceive myself, you have seen enough to preclude
all doubt as to its justice. If they reject every
fundamental doctrine of the religion of Christ,
they, of course, reject christianity; if they re-

ject christianity, they, surely, are not christians; if they are not christians, their congregations, evidently, ought not to be called churches, nor their ordinances considered as valid: and, these things being so, you ought to regard a proposition to go and hear them preach, or to read their publications, as you would a proposition to hear a preacher of open infidelity, or to read an artful publication of a follower of *Herbert* or of *Hume*.

I have said, that Unitarians ought to be considered and treated as DEISTS IN DISGUISE. I beg that this language may not be misconstrued. It is by no means my intention to intimate, for I do not believe, that Unitarians are, as a sect, a set of hypocrites; that they profess one thing, and really believe another. I have no reason to doubt that they are as sincere in their profession of belief, that is, that they *as really* believe what they *profess* to believe, as any of us all. But my meaning is, that, while they assume, and insist on retaining the christian *name*, their *creed* really does not differ much, in substance, from that of serious Deists. Now, if this be the case, and if the fact that they are substantially Deists, be,

in effect, concealed from popular view by the name which they bear, what is this but being *Deists* under the christian name, in other words, *Deists in disguise*? I certainly take no pleasure in using offensive language. On the contrary, I can truly say, that every thing of this kind which I have employed in these Letters has been extorted from me by a painful sense of duty; but my obligation to state that which I deem both true, and highly important to the best interests of mankind, is paramount to all considerations of delicacy or ceremony.

My advice to refuse all attendance on the preaching, and to avoid all perusal of the publications, of Unitarians, will, perhaps, appear to some, of more dubious propriety. "What!" some may be ready to say, "are you so great an enemy to free inquiry, and so fearful of the effects of it on your own cause, as to oppose the reading of works hostile to what you deem truth? How are the friends of orthodoxy to be established in the faith, but by temperate and candid discussion? And how is such discussion to be impartially conducted, without at least the occasional perusal of books written in

“opposition to the truth?” This plea appears, at first view, by no means destitute of plausibility; but will be found, I think, when carefully examined, wholly without force.

I am a warm friend to free and impartial inquiry; and where persons have leisure, a taste for reading, and such habits of investigation as qualify them for the task, I think it my duty to encourage extensive reading on both sides of the most fundamental subjects which become matter of controversy. Those who are called to defend the truth, are especially and solemnly bound to make themselves acquainted, as far as they have opportunity, with the diversified arts and refuges of error; and even some of those who are not official defenders of the faith, may, profitably to themselves, and usefully to others, employ a portion of their time in examining the works of hereticks, and even of the worst hereticks. Such an examination, when properly conducted, will tend to confirm their faith; to enlarge their minds and views; to put them on their guard against the spirit of Anti-christ; and to render the truth as it is in Jesus more dear to their hearts. No man was ever yet injured by an enlightened, de-

vout, and cautious investigation of the ground on which he rests. And I will venture to add, that if any man will honestly and patiently read both sides of the Unitarian controversy; if he will, with diligence, and prayer, and candour, do ample justice to the best works in support of that system, as well as to the best in opposition to it, I have no fear of the result. I have no doubt that the further he proceeds in this course, the more he will discover of the pernicious and blasphemous character of that "God-denying heresy," which it is the object of these pages to exhibit and oppose.

But where persons have little leisure or taste for reading; where they have no opportunity of perusing the ablest works which have been written in favour of the personal glory and work of the Redeemer, and no conscientious, settled purpose of procuring and studying them;—in short, where they do not firmly resolve to go *deeply* into the subject, and do something like *full justice* to both sides in the dispute; then let them carefully avoid Unitarian publications. To do otherwise would be like swallowing poison, without accompanying or following it with

the requisite antidote. Many a man has begun with the intention of reading no more than an occasional pamphlet or two on the side of heresy, and fully resolving, at the same time, to study some of the best replies, or other respectable treatises, on the opposite side: but as he advanced, his taste for the former daily increased; they soothed his feelings, flattered his pride, and drew him insensibly into the snare. He forgot his resolution to read on the side of truth; and, in a little while, became confirmed in fundamental error, without any thing that deserved the name of sober inquiry.

I repeat it, then, avoid Unitarian publications, as you would a cup of poison; unless you are prepared and determined to go fully into the examination of the controversy. When you are urged to purchase or peruse them, ask yourselves, in the fear of God, "Am I in a situation to read on both sides of this dispute, to such extent, and with such patience, as its importance evidently demands?" If you cannot answer this question in the affirmative, turn away from the proposal with pious abhorrence. Life is too

short to be wasted on trash, and the soul too precious to be made the sport of a series of fancied experiments on deadly poison. Study the BIBLE more than any other book. There you will find "truth without any mixture of error." Recollect that you are hastening to a tribunal, where the dogmas of men can avail you nothing, and where the word of God will furnish the great and only standard of trial. I entreat you, then, to study it daily, with humble prayer, that you may be led into all truth, and that you may be enabled to apply it in a wise and profitable manner. The time and attention bestowed on this blessed Volume, you will never regret in a dying hour: but thousands, in that solemn hour, have reproached infidel and heretical seducers, as the authors of their ruin, and mourned, with anguish of spirit, over the folly of listening to their plausible but destructive falsehoods.

But, if you avoid the *preaching* and the *books* of Unitarians, it will perhaps be asked, how ought you to treat their *persons*? I answer, with all that respect and benevolence which the ties of humanity and neighbourhood demand. Though they are in fatal error; though they preach

another gospel; an entirely different religion from that which you believe; yet this diversity does by no means dissolve the ties of nature, of kindred, or of society. Still they are children of the same common Parent, and they need all the tenderness of your compassion, and all the importunity of your prayers. Treat them, then, with attention and respect. Be ever ready to promote their welfare and happiness. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and animosity be banished from your intercourse with them. Pray for them without ceasing; and endeavour to win them by the lustre of your example. Let them see, in short, that you possess the spirit of the gospel; that you have no feelings of wounded pride, or personal resentment, on account of their differing from you; but that a tender concern for their temporal and eternal interest, impels you to desire and pray, that *God may give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.*

How would you treat an avowed *Deist*, who should reside in your neighbourhood, and maintain a decent, and even exemplary moral character? You certainly would not think of with-

drawing from him the kind offices of society. You would not study to meet him with a scowl, and to convince him continually, by repulsive and contemptuous treatment, that you despised him, and wished to avoid his company. Far less would you allow yourselves to assail him with the language of scorn and reproach, whenever you happened to fall in his way. On the contrary, you would endeavour, by a mild and respectful deportment; by friendly offices; by a constant manifestation of christian benevolence; by embracing suitable occasions to converse with him, in a fraternal and affectionate manner, on the great subject, respecting which you thought so differently; and by showing, in every proper way, that you really wished him well, temporally and eternally, to bring him to a better mind. Let this be the model for your treatment of Unitarians. If they are *Deists in disguise*, as I have alledged, there can be no doubt of the justice of such treatment. Were there to be any difference of conduct on the part of Christians, in the two cases supposed, they ought perhaps, to be more marked in their refusal to recognize Unitarians in their religious character, because they *lay claim* to the title of christian, while the others do not, but avow their real name and principles.

Rely on it, my Friends, Unitarians have been too long courteously called Christians, and recognized as such by the Orthodox around them. We have too long suffered the principles of worldly politeness to betray us into unfaithfulness to the cause of our Master. When Unitarianism was rare in our country, and rather courted concealment than publicity; and when, in most cases, the sentiments of certain individuals on this subject were rather suspected than known, it was customary, particularly in some neighbourhoods, without scruple, to allow them a place among the various denominations of Christians; to associate with them, on equal terms, as such; and even to admit of free ecclesiastical intercourse. Some of the Orthodox, from local circumstances, have been so much in habits of this kind, that it seems difficult, if not a kind of outrage, to alter them. But is it not a duty to submit to such an alteration, painful as it may be to social feeling? If it was the duty of the Reformers and their adherents, to come out from *Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations*; and if it be allowed, on all hands, to be incumbent on christians to refuse all fellowship, in matters of

religion, with the tribes of open infidelity ; to me it appears equally plain, that christians ought no longer to acknowledge as such, or to think of meeting on any common religious ground, those who deny the christian's God, and preach entirely another gospel. *Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

With respect to the validity of sealing ordinances administered by Unitarians, the highest Judicatory of the Church to which we belong has given a decision, which ought to be generally known ; which, I trust, will be regarded with approbation and respect by every Presbyterian in the United States ; and which goes the whole length of justifying all that I have said, in the present Letter, respecting the manner in which that sect ought to be considered by christians.

In the year 1814, a question was laid before the General Assembly, by the Presbytery of *Harmony*, in the following words, viz.

“A person who had been baptized in his infancy by Dr. *Priestley*, applied for admission to the Lord’s Table. Ought the baptism administered by Dr. *Priestley*, then a Unitarian, to be considered as valid?”—The Assembly, after mature deliberation, decided as follows:—
viz.

“Resolved, That this question be answered in the negative, and it was accordingly determined in the negative. In the present state of our country, whilst Unitarian errors, in various forms, are making their insidious approaches; whilst the advocates of this heresy, in many cases, are practising a system of concealment, and insinuating themselves into the confidence of multitudes who have no suspicion of their defection from the faith, the Assembly feel it to be their duty to speak without reserve. It is the deliberate and unanimous opinion of this Assembly, that those who renounce the fundamental doctrine of the Trinity, and deny that Jesus Christ is the same in substance, equal in power and glory with the Father, cannot be recognized as ministers of the Gospel, and that their ministrations are wholly invalid.”

This decision needs no explanation or defence. It precisely accords with what you have seen in the fifth Letter, to have been the judgment of the primitive church, and of the pious in all ages. No law of the family of Christ was regarded as more settled and familiar, than that those who denied the Divinity and Atonement of the Redeemer, were to be denied the name of Christian, and their ordinances rejected as of no validity. In deciding as they did, then, our church did no more than follow the example of primitive times, and the best models of ecclesiastical order and purity, from that period to the present.

This decision of our General Assembly has, indeed, been stigmatized by Unitarians, as a piece of ecclesiastical "intolerance" of a very odious kind. But such a charge displays as much of ignorance as of weakness. Happily for our country, neither the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, nor any other ecclesiastical body in the United States, has a right to talk of "toleration," or to attempt "intolerance," towards any religious community whatever.

Toleration presupposes a power to put down; of which every one knows the very suggestion to be ridiculous. But is it "intolerance" for a church to fix the terms for regulating its own communion? Has not every church, self-evidently, a right to say whom it will receive, and whom it will not receive, to its peculiar privileges? Does the father of a family "oppress" or "injure" the community in which he lives, when he gives notice that he cannot admit as residents under his own roof, those who will not conform to his own rules? Certainly not. He may even make unwise or capricious rules, the operation of which may incommode and injure his own family; but he invades the liberty of no one out of it; and the good sense of one who should complain that such a man infringed on the rights of his neighbours, would not, I take it, be very favourably estimated. In like manner, it is conceivable that the Presbyterian church may go to an extreme in narrowing the door of admission to her communion; but that is her own concern. Others have nothing to do with it. The only effect can be to thin her ranks, and weaken herself. Her own published views of this subject appear to me entirely correct. "Every

“christian church,” she asserts, “is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its communion, and the qualifications of its ministers and members; as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ hath appointed. In the exercise of this right they may, notwithstanding, err, in making the terms of communion either too lax, or too narrow: yet, even in this case, they do not infringe upon the liberty or the rights of others; but only make an improper use of their own.”* After this, it is hoped no man will venture to talk of “Presbyterian intolerance,” who either understands the meaning of terms, when applied to American churches, or who wishes to escape the ridicule of all persons of common sense.

Let not the confidence with which Unitarians predict the downfall of Orthodoxy, and the speedy prevalence of their system throughout Christendom, give you a moment’s alarm. One of the arts by which they sometimes endeavour to recommend that system, is to predict, that, in a

* INTRODUCTION to the *Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church*.

very few years, (some have said in *ten*) there will be no other form of Christianity than Unitarianism, countenanced by any respectable portion of mankind. Let no man's heart fail him at such predictions. They are "*great swelling words of vanity,*" which will issue in nothing but the disappointment and shame of those who utter them. I am inclined, indeed, to believe that there will be, for a time, considerable additions to the ranks of Unitarian societies. But from what sources will these additions be drawn? From among the sober, thinking, and exemplary members of Orthodox congregations? All probability and all experience say no. But from the ranks of infidelity; from among those who belong to no congregations whatever, and who have forborne to connect themselves with any, because there was too much religion among them for their taste. Those persons must have been very careless observers of what was passing before them, who have not perceived, that infidels, scepticks, the profane and licentious, those who wish to continue in sin, and yet to have no fear of hell, and in general the enemies of a strict and spiritual religion, are, in many places, flocking to the Unitarian standard. And as these

form a numerous body, in every part of the world, there can be little doubt that considerable numbers of them will adorn the triumph of Unitarians for a few years to come. But it will be a triumph as short as it is ignoble. It is just as incredible that *such* materials should form a respectable and permanent religious body, on which the Divine blessing may be expected to rest, as that the image in *Nebuchadnezzar's* dream, made up of *brass*, (the fine *gold* and even the *silver* are entirely wanting here) and *iron*, and *clay*, should have lasted forever. Their cause, like that image, will soon crumble to pieces, before the breath of JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, whom they blaspheme. The truth as it is in Jesus, and the Church founded upon it, have survived the impious efforts of *Cerintus*, and *Ebion*, of *Noetus*, and *Artemon*, of *Arius*, and *Socinus*, and of a host like them; and it will survive, and grow, and triumph gloriously, when the similar efforts of their successors of the present day shall have gone the way of all such unhallowed and spurious things.

I have thus, my Christian Brethren, completed the consideration of the principal subjects on

which I proposed to address you in these Letters. How the arguments which have been urged may impress your minds, I cannot venture to foretel; but I have urged none which did not appear to myself, weighty and conclusive. I have studied, on the one hand, not to magnify the importance of any truth beyond what I verily believe the word of God to warrant; and on the other, not to represent the guilt and danger of any error, as greater than the same unerring word, in my view, has pronounced it. I cannot help once more repeating, that it has given me real pain to employ the language which I have felt myself compelled to employ with respect to Unitarians and their principles; and nothing but a sacred regard to truth, to the duty which I owe to my Master in heaven, and to your immortal souls, and the souls of your children, would have induced me to adopt such language. If I do not deceive myself, I have desired, in every sentence that I have written, to *speaking the truth in love*, and to recollect that both you and I must soon *appear before the judgment seat of Christ*.

Before I close, it is my earnest desire, my respected Friends, to remind both You and myself of THREE CONSIDERATIONS, which I humbly conceive ought never to be lost sight of on this subject, and a due regard to which cannot but be productive of the happiest effects.

The FIRST is, That while we sedulously maintain, as DOCTRINES, the great truths in support of which I have written, it is of the utmost importance that we EMBRACE THEM AS PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES, AND LIVE UNDER THEIR SANCTIFYING INFLUENCE. We may hold the truth in unrighteousness. Many, no doubt, have done so. Men may be perfectly orthodox in speculation; nay, they may be bigotted and even furious contenders for *the faith once delivered to the saints*, and yet know nothing of that cordial reception of the truth, as a practical system, which distinguishes real from nominal christians, and which alone can secure to us either the consolations, or the sanctifying effects, of that religion which we profess. Let us, then, often, and seriously inquire, while we maintain correct opinions concerning the Person and work of the blessed Saviour, how our HEARTS stand affected towards

him ? Has *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, shone into our hearts ?* Has He manifested himself to us, not as He does to the world, but as He does to them whom He has chosen out of the world ? Has his personal glory inspired our supreme love ? Do we study to maintain an affectionate communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as our covenant God, in all the adorable perfections, and appropriate offices of each Person ? Does *the love of Christ* daily constrain us ? Do we go to his blessed fulness continually for light, and strength, and sanctification and comfort ? As we are indebted to his great undertaking, and his atoning sacrifice, for all that we enjoy and hope for, do we habitually cherish that deep and tender sense of obligation which corresponds with this fact ; coming to Him daily with love, gratitude, and thanksgiving, and relying on Him for *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption ?*

There is, indeed, little prospect of being able to impress the mind of any one with a just sense of the importance of the doctrines which we have been considering, until they begin to be viewed

in the light of *personal experience*. However perfectly we may demonstrate their fundamental nature, they will, after all, be really regarded as matters of speculation only, as long as those to whom they are addressed remain *at ease in sin*. But when their eyes are opened to see their real situation, as fallen and perishing sinners, then the question, whether the Saviour into whose hands they are invited to commit their souls, is the mighty God, or a frail and fallible man like themselves, will appear momentous indeed! Then they will not only embrace his Divinity as a doctrine of the Bible, but as the foundation of their hopes, and the life of their souls. Then they will see a beauty, a value, an infinite importance, and a glory in this great doctrine, which no conclusions of reasoning ever imparted to it in their view before. Yes, my Friends, it is only when we receive this precious truth *in the love* of it, that we can be said to be *rooted and grounded in the faith*. It is only THEN that we can be said to *build upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone*.

The SECOND suggestion which I wish to offer, relates to the importance of your endeavouring, with all the diligence and solicitude which become Christian Parents, DAILY TO INCULCATE CORRECT SENTIMENTS IN RELATION TO THIS, AS WELL AS EVERY OTHER SUBJECT, ON YOUR BE-LOVED CHILDREN.

In these "days of rebuke and of blasphemy," I know not a more important duty devolving on us as followers of Christ, than to train up our Offspring in the knowledge and love of his truth. All the most precious interests of our children themselves, of civil society, and of the church of God, are involved in a faithful discharge of this duty. If we neglect to instruct and warn them, at a period of life in which the want of experience, the strength of passion, and a proneness to be carried away by plausible professions and appearances, peculiarly expose them to danger, the most fearful consequences may be expected ; consequences involving nothing less than their eternal death ; but *their blood will be required at our hands*. I know that some parents deliberately act upon the principle of taking no measures to enlighten the minds of

their children on the subject of religion, and especially of forbearing to prepossess them in favour of any system of doctrine; on the plea, that any attempt to instil a particular set of sentiments into their minds, has a tendency to fill them with prejudices, and to interfere with an impartial inquiry and judgment for themselves, when they reach mature age. But can there be a more unreasonable plea? Do we calculate thus in the ordinary affairs of life? What should we think of that parent, who should determine never to inform his child, that if he thrust his hand into the fire, it will be burnt; or that if he swallow a virulent poison, it will destroy his life—for fear of filling his mind with prejudices? Or what should we think of the parent, who should refuse to apprise a child, whom he professed greatly to love, that *lying* and *theft* are base practices, which will infallibly bring those who indulge them to disgrace and punishment—under the pretence that he did not wish to pre-occupy his mind, or to interfere with free inquiry, on moral subjects? We should certainly pronounce such a parent either a monster of cruelty, or miserably insane. But if every parent consider it the part of wisdom and affection to

put his children on their guard, as early as possible, against every thing which may endanger their temporal welfare; how much more pressing is the obligation, in the view of a *pious* parent, to warn them early and carefully against those seductive principles or companions which may jeopard their eternal happiness! Were you to see your children assailed by the arts of open infidels, reading their books, frequenting their impious assemblies, and beginning to borrow their blasphemous cavils, you would, no doubt, consider the prospect as highly alarming, and hasten to employ all proper means to save them. But, if what I have said in the preceding pages be correct, the arts of Unitarians are not less seductive, nor the danger of yielding to them less imminent, than those of open infidelity. To your children and dependents, then, you owe the solemn debt of faithful instruction and warning on this subject. Tell them the real nature of this "soul-destroying heresy." Let them not fall blind-folded and unwarned over the fatal precipice. Lead them with humble diligence and prayer to the knowledge and the sanctuary of that blessed Redeemer, whose Divinity and atoning Sacrifice, form, as you have seen, the only hope of sinful man.

The truth is,—and however offensive the expression of it may be, I cannot forbear to express it—the truth is, if I had no concern for the everlasting welfare of my children, I could no more consent that they should be brought up under Unitarian influence, or in Unitarian institutions, than I could to place them under the direction of the avowed teachers of frigid and cheerless scepticism. Nay, I am compelled seriously to doubt, whether it ought not to be deemed less dangerous to commit a youth to the tuition of an avowed infidel, than to that of one who would be zealous in endeavouring to instil into his mind the principles of a corrupt and delusive system, under the name of the Christian Religion.

When I consider the tendency of Unitarian sentiments, especially in some of their prevalent modifications, equally to take away the most powerful motives to virtue, and the strongest barriers against vice, I should certainly feel as if, in committing my children to such guidance, I was exposing them to double danger;—danger, I mean, of temporal, no less than spiritual ruin. Can any impartial man believe that the

lax system of these men is as much calculated to form young persons to purity, self-denial, sobriety, diligence, and true elevation of character, as the system of the Orthodox? That it is as much adapted to humble pride, to curb the passions, and to sanctify the life? I can only say, if it be, I must give up all belief in the connection between causes and effects. Unitarianism appears to me to have a natural tendency to encourage the young in those habits of dissipation, which are altogether unfriendly to great attainments in knowledge and virtue; and which the man of sound secular wisdom, as well as the christian, ought to wish to repress in his children, especially while their characters are forming.—Again, then, I say, expose not those who ought to be dear to you as your own souls, to such unhallowed and fatal influence. Endeavour to place them in circumstances and under teachers favourable to their being led in “the old paths,” in “the good way,” which you may hope will conduct them to honour, to usefulness, and to eternal life.

The THIRD and last consideration to which I beg your regard, is the GREAT IMPORTANCE

OF MANIFESTING THE INFLUENCE OF GENUINE CHRISTIANITY ON THE TEMPER AND THE PRACTICE. Let not your Unitarian neighbours, who embrace a spurious christianity, and who more resemble infidels, in drawing boastful comparisons between themselves and the Orthodox, on the score of moral virtue, than any other class of religionists with which I am acquainted ;—let them have no occasion to remark, that you are less pure, less benevolent, less publick spirited, than those whom you stigmatize as *hereticks*. *Give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. Let them rather be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.* Let it be seen that Orthodoxy is not a mere system of heartless speculations, but that it is as benign and heavenly in its influence, as it is scriptural in its authority. Study to spread its glory by the lustre of your example. Every one is not qualified to defend Christianity by argument ; but every one may defend it quite as effectually and usefully by an eminently holy life. Endeavour, then, by the daily cultivation of every christian grace and virtue, and by *going about, like your Divine Master, doing good*, to recommend the truth to all around you. Make no arrogant claims. Say

to none, either by your words or conduct, *Stand by, for we are holier than ye:* but let your lives be a continual sermon; *let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven.*

My Christian Brethren, I have now done. With the freedom of a minister of Christ, and with the affectionate respect of one who feels a cordial interest in the welfare of you and your children, I have ventured to address you on the most important of all subjects. My first prayer is, that what I have written may be made to promote your spiritual benefit; my next, that you may receive it, as it is intended, as an offering of unfeigned christian friendship. But it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment. The day is approaching when You and I must stand before the judgment seat of that Saviour, whose glory I have humbly endeavoured to vindicate. God grant that we all, as well as those whom we are now compelled to regard as enemies of the truth, *may find mercy of the Lord in that day!* God grant that, when that trial shall arrive, we may be found not to have rested in speculative notions, but to have devoted our-

selves in heart and in life to HIM who was made sin for us, though He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him ! His name shall endure forever. His name shall be continued as long as the sun ; and men shall be blessed in Him : all nations shall call Him blessed. Now blessed be his glorious name forever ; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory ! Amen, and Amen !



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Letters on Unitarianism :

Andover-Harvard

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the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are undernourished has increased from 600 million to 800 million.

There are a number of reasons for this. First, the world population has increased from 5 billion in 1987 to 6 billion in 1999, and is projected to reach 8 billion by 2025. Second, the number of people who are undernourished has increased from 1.2 billion in 1987 to 1.6 billion in 1999. Third, the number of people who are undernourished has increased from 1.2 billion in 1987 to 1.6 billion in 1999. Fourth, the number of people who are undernourished has increased from 1.2 billion in 1987 to 1.6 billion in 1999. Fifth, the number of people who are undernourished has increased from 1.2 billion in 1987 to 1.6 billion in 1999.

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